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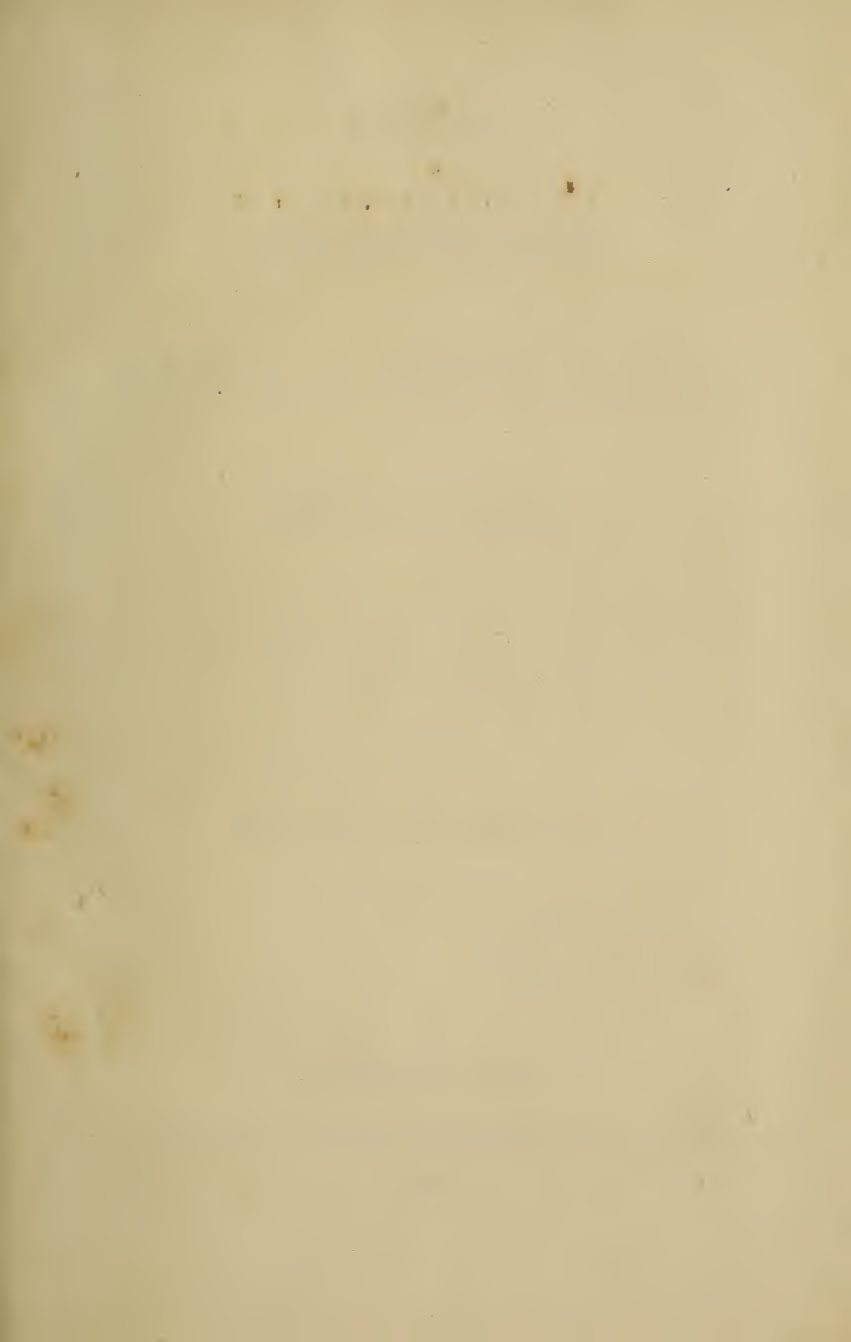
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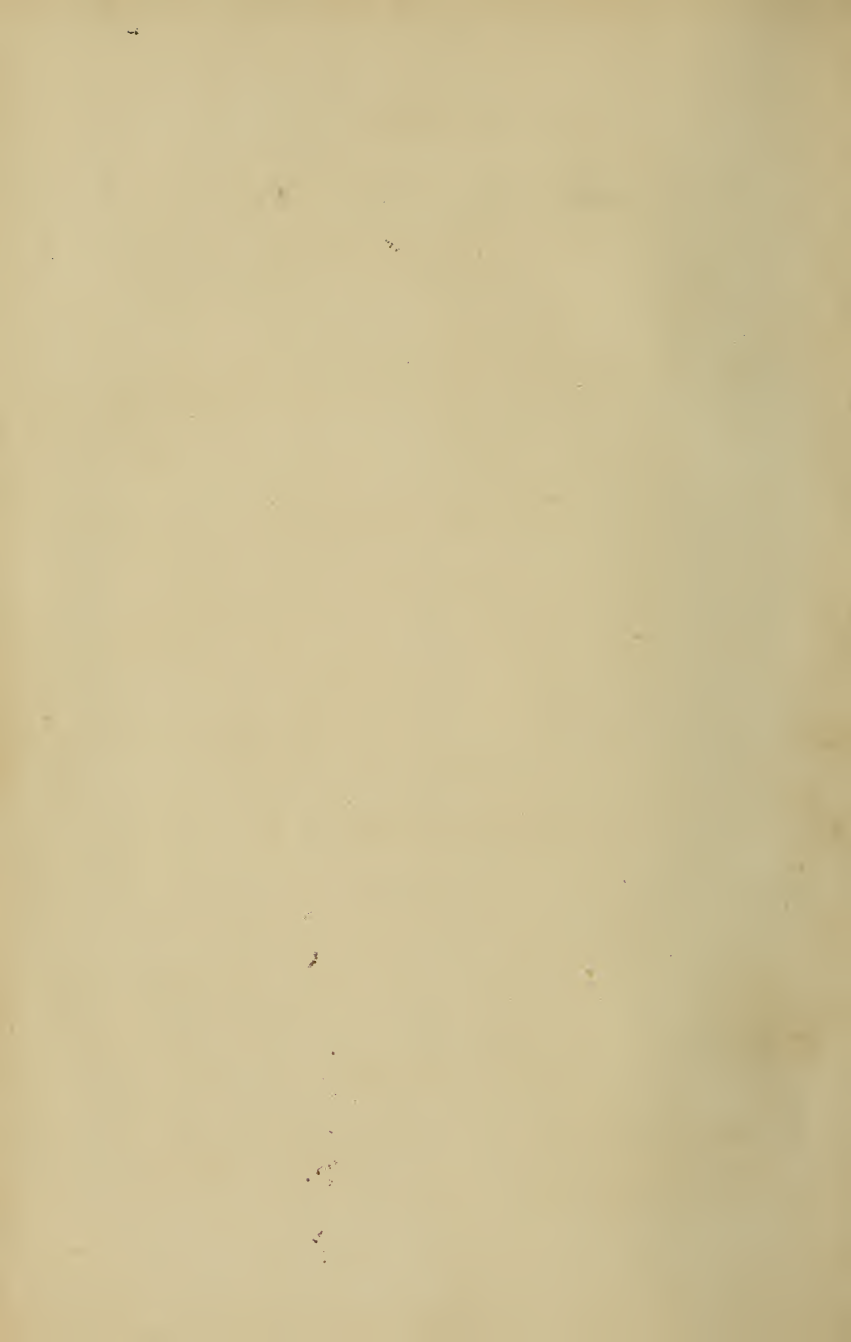
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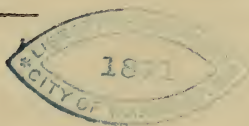


A SERIES  
OF LECTURES  
ON OLD TESTAMENT  
MIRACLES.

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BY

REV. HENRY HERVEY, A. M.



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## PREFACE.

THE following Lectures are presented to the public, as they were delivered by the author, to the people of his pastoral charge; except some extemporary illustrations of principles, which are briefly stated at their close. He would, probably, not have thought of presenting them in this form, had it not been for the suggestion, and advice of some of his ministerial brethren, on whose judgment he had reason to rely. One reason which has had influence in leading to this conclusion is, that the author is not aware that any similar course of lectures on miracles has been published, and, therefore, that they might contribute their humble influence to direct the mind of the reader to certain portions of Scripture, and tracts of thought, which are less familiarized to the common mind. Another reason is, that unless their character has been mistaken, they embrace a considerable amount of thought for the space which they occupy. And though the taste of the age may, even to a fault, demand light reading, and the ornaments of language, rather than sentiment; there are still many, who wish food for the mind, to induce them to undertake the labor of reading. A third reason is, that it is apprehended that an unusual amount of practical infidelity prevails, in reference to the recognition of God's providential control over the affairs of the nation, and in reference to the Bible, as an elementary book of instruction, to form the principles of the youth of the community; so that for political, as well as religious reasons, the friend of his country should lend his influence to form a more enlightened and vigorous national conscience.

The plan of these lectures, leading necessarily through the entire history of the Jewish commonwealth, from its organization to its overthrow, has afforded frequent occasion to impress the truth, that God is the law-giver, as well as judge of nations; and that national prosperity is to be expected *only* by a general conformity to his

will, and that without this, the best constitutional or legal provisions will not perpetuate our happiness.

Miracles too, being one of the most important and fundamental evidences of a revelation from God, the contemplation of these manifestations of supernatural agency in proof of the mission of his servants, and the heavenly origin of his truth, may be of advantage also to the christian, in establishing him more intelligently and firmly in the certainty of his faith in a revelation, to which he owes all his hopes of acceptance with God here, and of a happy immortality hereafter.

The incidents of real life, and the biographical sketches which are every where connected with miraculous events, and which form prominent topics of consideration in these lectures, it is hoped may be of service, not only as interesting the attention, but of improving the heart, and of comforting the christian,—as well as stimulating him to set for himself, and aspire to a high standard of christian excellence.

It is, doubtless, not without an important design, that the wisdom of God has given so much of the Scriptures in historical narrative, and so little in polemic discussion and didactic teaching. As it is, we are made to see more impressively the truth, and the error in the life, than we could in the abstract. This method, which divine teaching has suggested, should be followed more than it generally is, by those whose office it is to teach religion to their fellow men. In these lectures there is some effort made at this; how far it is successful, the reader will be the more competent to decide.

A fourth reason for giving these discourses to the public is, that the pastor may afford to his congregation a *memorial* in this permanent form, which may give them and their children counsel, when his living voice shall be silenced in death.

MARTINSBURG, April 23, 1844

# LECTURES ON OLD TESTAMENT MIRACLES.

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## LECTURE I.

### CREATION.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

GEN. 1: 1.

The belief in the existence of a God, is fundamental, alike both to natural and revealed religion. It is a first principle of all correct reasoning in theology, as well as a necessary element in all consciousness of moral duty. It is a necessary axiom also, in all philosophical reasonings. Without the admission of this idea, as a first principle, every process of reasoning will labor under the deficiency of a starting point. The recognition of a God, is one of the peculiar distinctions between man and the inferior animals; gives him moral elevation, and stamps his nature with dignity. The Scriptures do not undertake to prove this truth. Revelation refers to it as a truth already known. It seems to proceed upon the supposition, that mankind are already familiar with this idea, as if we had been previously sufficiently schooled in this first lesson of all science, and proceeds to instruct us in other lessons, for the understanding of which, its help was needed. It seems to presume, that we are able to learn this



first element of theological knowledge without a preceptor, and offers us assistance in the discovery of other truths, for the understanding of which it regards us as incompetent. In making the first announcement of the divine will to man, no argument is attempted, to prove the existence of Him who speaks, and requires obedience. But this seems to be taken for granted, as an already received and well known truth. The first notice we have of a God breaking the silence of eternal ages, and unfolding his attributes to a world of gazing intelligences, is not in the utterance of an argument, with premises and conclusions, demonstrating the divine existence, and demanding our assent; but he is first introduced to our attention as *acting*; and by the magnificent display of power and intelligence, we are led to the knowledge of the being who acts. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The announcement does not give us time to speculate respecting the *omnipotent energy* in a state of quiescence, in an unfathomable eternity, and to attempt the hopeless task of deciphering his inscrutable attributes on the dark field of unmeasured duration, before he exhibits himself on the theatre as an acting Deity. The first notice inspiration gives us of God, is of a God in *action*, and from the action leaves us to infer the properties of the actor.

It was not the object of revealed religion, to prove the existence of a God. It goes every where upon the presumption, that this truth is admitted, and proceeds to explain, and enforce the duties growing out of it. Revelation meant to prove, that God had spoken to the world, but the world itself is designed to prove that God existed. The miracles of the



New Testament were designed to prove, that Jesus Christ was the Savior, and that he delivered the divine will to a world fallen, and completed it by apostles, to whom heaven's high seal of miracles was committed, as the infallible credentials of their mission. The miracle of creation was designed to prove to the world the existence of a God, the Creator. The miracles of the New Testament proved the divinity of the Savior's character, and the relation mankind hold to him as Redeemer; the miracle of creation proves the divinity of Jehovah, and the relation mankind hold to him as God. The miracles of the New Testament were an exhibition of the attributes of God to a world of sinners; the miracle of creation was an exhibition of the attributes of God to a world unfallen. As by the miracles of the New Testament we are led to rely with unlimited confidence on the character of Christ, as our Savior, and that he hath spoken to us the words of infinite wisdom; by the miracle of creation we are led to believe with an unwavering faith in the being of a God, and from the wisdom displayed in the miraculous workmanship of creation, to judge of the wisdom displayed in the miraculous work of redemption. From the issues of the workmanship from the OMNIPOTENT hand, we are better prepared to judge of the communications from the omniscient mind. Whatever we know then of God, as Creator, or Redeemer, is mainly communicated and authenticated to us through the medium of miraculous power. God has in this way employed his *omnipotence*, to make certain to us, not only his existence, but his mercy.

The miracles of Christ prove against the Infidel, that the Bible is the word of God; the miracle of

creation proves against the Atheist, that there is a God. The one proves that the world of matter and mind did not come by chance, nor was the work of an anonymous author; the others prove that Revelation is not the production of a fictitious authorship. The one leads us in the sure pathway of investigation to the knowledge of a God; the other in the sure pathway to heaven. The one is the foundation of the knowledge of natural religion; the other of revealed religion. Upon these two sources of testimony the two pillars of theism and christianity rise with majestic strength and beauty, to sustain the superstructure of morality and religion,—of man's faith and hope, for time, and for immortality. Upon the one source of proof of a God—the miracle of creation—the obscurer faith of the heathen world rests; but the clearer faith of the christian world reposes upon both. So long as reason uses these two hand-maids for their proper purposes, and relies upon them with implicit faith, she moves onward in a clear sky, alike undisturbed by the gloomy atmosphere of Atheism, or the whirlpools of Deism, toward the region of perfect light.

We said it was not the object of Revelation to prove a God, yet a God must be known, before we can recognize a revelation from him. His existence must be known, before a communication from him can be identified. The being must be believed to exist, before he can be obeyed—his existence known, before his authority can be acknowledged. How, then, is this all important, first truth ascertained? this first principle to every subsequent truth settled? It has been regarded by some, as *intuitive*, or rather an innate idea of the mind, acquired without information or reasoning. This, however, would be not

only without, but against evidence. There are no innate ideas, all our knowledge is *acquired*. We are furnished by nature with a capacity to acquire ideas, but not with the ideas themselves. Some have supposed it might be acquired from assuming the necessary existence of the first cause; but why should we ever think of a cause, if there was no visible effect to lead us to inquire for its cause? Such an idea would itself be an effect without a cause. Reaching at once to the cause, without first having traveled to it through the effect, is contrary to all the operations of mind. The only remaining method then is, to acquire the idea of the cause from the effect. A cause may manifest its existence by physical energy, or by mental operation, or from both. In these two ways only can we know the existence of a God: By his works, and by his word. And we must learn him first by his works, before we can learn him by his word. An absent and unknown person must, in some way, by a work, prove his existence to us, before we can authenticate a communication from him. Thus God made the world, proving to man his existence, before he made to him a communication of his will. Christ recognized this principle when he said of his miracles, "the works that I do they testify of me. Believe me not for the word which I spake unto you, but believe me for the work's sake." God first made the world, before he made the intelligent observer of it; that the things seen might declare his eternal power and godhead; that being satisfied of his existence, he might be prepared to receive a communication from him. Man, at first, was not left to one or the other of these proofs. He first had the proof from the works—he opened his eyes upon a beautiful and

finished world; and the Lord also spake to him in the garden, and gave him the law of his moral being. God having made himself known, in these ways, to the parents of the race, it is fair to conclude, that all their posterity have been benefited by the knowledge they acquired—that in these two ways God is still manifesting himself to the entire race of men. By his works he is still accessible to the entire population of the earth. “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge (of him.) There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.” And tradition of the primeval knowledge has, doubtless, followed the nations in all their migrations; and where there is more than tradition, there is a full revelation. Thus the knowledge of God is accessible by the race, by the exercise of the common and every day principle of reasoning from the effect to the cause. By inferring from the work, there must have been a worker; and from the fact that there is a *word*, there must have been a speaker.

The evidence then, for the existence of a God, is reducible to the simplest method of experimental proof. We see an effect, and by a necessary law of the operation of our minds, we refer it to a cause. We see adaptation in the effect, to a certain end, we unavoidably infer there was design in the cause, and therefore it did not happen without an intelligent agent. We observe the workmanship throughout, in its most magnificent displays, and its most minute manifestations, and it every where holds out to our admiration, the most perfect fitness of means to an end; we are therefore led unavoidably to the conclusion, that it must have been the offspring of design. The *designer*, the Scripture



calls God. By the same process of mind by which we infer, that any piece of complex mechanism which we examine, and which we have not seen the workman making, to be the product of some intelligent mind, do we infer, that the world of matter and mind is the product of an intelligent cause. It is not necessary that we see the work in the progress of accomplishment, in either case, rationally and fully to come to this conclusion. It is sufficient that we see the work done, and discover the evidence of design, to lead us to this conclusion. And such is the law of our mental operation, that we cannot come to any other conclusion. Neither would it weaken the force of this reasoning, if a part of the race could be found, who had never inferred the existence of a God from his works, provided, when the evidence was pointed out to them, they must assent to it. Still the Atheist may ask, why may we not as well suppose the processes of matter to be eternal, as to suppose an eternal mind. We answer simply for the reason, that there is abundant proof, apart from the Bible, that the present economy, and races must have had a beginning, and there is no proof that the mind that originated them had a beginning. Again: The Geologist, it is said, brings proof *positive* of an anterior origin of our earth, long prior to this account by Moses. We answer, it makes no difference, provided he gives it an origin at all.

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#### REMARKS.

What a majestic aspect does the opening sentence of the Bible give us of a God. What may you not hope for, if he be your friend? If your enemy, what may you not fear?

## LECTURE II.

### THE DELUGE.

"And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered."—GEN. 7: 19, 20.

As the miracle of Creation teaches the world the being and attributes of God, so the Deluge teaches the doctrine of his Providence. The ushering into being a world, with all its order and adaptation, proves the previous existence of the cause which originated it; the upholding it in being, and preserving the order and harmony of its laws, or suspending, or counteracting them, proves the continued existence and superintendence of the power which first gave it being.

Not only was some magnificent display of power and wisdom necessary to impress the world of men with the belief of a God, but also striking interruptions of the established order of the Universe, are sometimes necessary to convince mankind that God is the governor of the world. Man in his depravity, likes not to retain the knowledge of God. And when he is known, they change the incorruptable God into an image. The existence of a particular, controlling Providence, is not so universal and abiding, as the admission of the divine existence. There is a principle adopted, professedly in honor of God, that he created the world, and impressed upon it the certain laws of its being, and then reti-

ring from his care of it, left it to the operations of those laws. Such reasoners pretend, that it derogates from the elevated character of the *Supreme*, to suppose him to be concerned with the minute occurrences of things. Judging of the infinite mind by their own, they imagine that it would too much occupy and distract the divine attention, to superintend *all* the occurrences in the immensity of his dominions. They seem to suppose, that Jehovah having once broken the silence of eternity, and called into exercise his eternally quiescent attributes, in the production of nature, and fixing her laws, that the godhead again retired to that *quietude* and *inaction*, in which they seem to suppose his dignity and happiness consist; and that the world of men and things having commenced their career, by the putting forth of the omnipotent energy, have been left to run their race, without the guiding or disturbing influence of that power which originated their motions; and in the exercise of this spirit inquire, "how doth God know?" and ask, "where is the promise of his coming? for all things continue as they were from the foundation of the world."

Thus it is, with man as he is, that the very stability and uniformity of nature, which are essential to the world being what it was, intended as the habitation of sentient and happy beings, and which so clearly prove the wisdom and goodness of the creator, as well as his incessant care of his creation, by man's perversity, have become the occasion of excluding from his regards, the being in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being. Strange, that the very constancy of God's attention, should become the argument to prove that

he paid no attention. That God should, by the very means which he employs to keep an abiding sense of his superintendence, should so far have failed, as by these *very* means, to have furnished mankind with an argument to disprove his care altogether. That the very surplusage of his goodness, in attending to the minutest affairs of his government should so far fail of leading the receivers of it to adore its exercise, as to lead them to disbelieve in its exercise altogether. But, it is the history of depravity, to despise the goodness and long suffering of God, not knowing that his goodness leadeth to repentance. To convince the world that the stream of good does not flow without a fountain, that the laws of nature, which man deifies, in the place of him who made and upholds them, are not omnipotent and unchangeable, it becomes necessary, sometimes, for him, whom human blindness cannot see, but looks only at the laws or means by which he sees proper to work, to break this uniformity, to rend the vail which conceals him from the sight, and to stop the fountain, which by flowing so long, has lead to the belief that it flows by necessity. And God to make himself known again to the world by the wonders which he executes, and, like as it was at first necessary to launch into immensity a world of organized existence, to unfold *His* existence, so it becomes necessary, sometimes, to break the order of nature, and launch out of existence the beings that have been made, to bring to view, and impress the idea of certain attributes, which the depravity of mankind have obscured.

For the manifestation of the righteousness of God's character, and the proof of his retributive



providence, such a display of divine interposition was made in the government of God, in the seventeenth century of this world's history. God, who created the world, and had hitherto upheld in uniform operation the laws which he had given it, then, for sufficient reasons, saw proper to suspend the regular order of things, to deface that beautiful world which he had made, and to depopulate it of its living inhabitants. The cause leading to this dreadful catastrophe, was the wickedness of man. Sin, introduced into this fair creation by the first of the race, had vegetated and matured, and now loudly called for the harvest of the earth to be gathered. Sixteen centuries of an alienated world had been sufficient almost to efface the knowledge of him who, in creation, had given such proof of his attributes, and rendered a second miraculous interposition necessary to convince the world, that the Creator was the Governor, and the Judge; and that he who had given such ample evidence of his wisdom, and goodness, in the construction of the world, was not indifferent to the manner in which it was used, or to the respect due to his own character, and the moral laws which he had given for the government of man. As an exercise of merited justice, therefore, towards a wicked race, as well as to be a monument to every succeeding generation, that God was the Judge, and that man could not sin with impunity, God predicted, and executed upon this world, the most dire catastrophe that has been, or will be experienced, till it shall have completed its present economy, and be dissolved by a deluge of fire.

The same class of men, however, that are slow to believe the doctrine of God's providential gov-

ernment, are also disposed to dispute the reality of this historical fact, and attribute the story to the uncertain sources of a fabulous origin. No fact, however, in the history of the world is so well attested, both by natural and civil history. It has been asserted that it is contrary to philosophy, and that the deluge could not be universal, because there was not a sufficient quantity of water to overflow the earth to the degree represented by Moses. The fact, however, is confirmed by natural history. Fossil remains of animals, of a former world, are found in every quarter of the globe. All the mountains of every region under heaven, where search has been made, conspire in one *universal* proof, that the sea was spread over their summits. Shells, skeletons of fish, and marine animals of every kind, are found in them. The remains of the native animals of Africa, have been dug up on the highlands of Siberia, and Tartary.

The truth of this narrative is confirmed by the tradition of it, which has prevailed universally. If such an event had never occurred, it would be impossible to account for the tradition of it, which is every where to be found, in the records of all pagan nations, as well as those who had the Scriptures.

It is a sufficient answer to the objection, on the ground of an insufficient quantity of water, that no one has ever meted out in the hallow of his hand, or fathomed the depths of waters in the bosom of the earth, or brought into his scales the stores of the firmament, and ascertained whether if these store-houses had united in pouring out their treasures upon the surface of the earth, and by a miraculous counteraction of the law of grav-

itation, made to stand there as an heap, there would not have been enough to have accomplished the purpose Moses assigns to it. In this, as in other matters, it is not enough to discredit a historical fact, and to bring an objection against it from your ignorance; you must bring it from your knowledge. To set it aside, you must not only be able to say, I do not know how it can be, but you must be able to say, I know it cannot be. To disprove a miraculous fact, it is not to the purpose to shew, that it could not be produced by the operation of the known laws of nature; it must be shown that *Omnipotence has not, nor could not* produce it. But it is objected against, as contrary to matter of fact, on the ground that the Ark could not contain all the animals found on the earth, together with the provision necessary to sustain them. In reference to this it has been proved, by actual computation, that the Ark had the capacity of eighteen ships of war, the largest in present use, and might carry twenty thousand men with provision for six months, and military stores. There were eight human persons to be preserved in it, and about two hundred and fifty pairs of four-footed beasts, with the fowls, and such reptiles as could not live in the water. Can any one doubt, then, of its capacity to hold them? The credibility of the fact then, is **not** to be questioned.

But how terrible to the population then living, was the event!!

It is generally supposed by those who have made such matters a subject of much study, that the population of the earth was then as great or greater than now. The data for this conclusion are the age of the world, and the length of human life.

To give it vivacity, place yourself in the opening of such a devastation of a world. See the heavens frowning with unwonted fury; the earth opening and spouting upward columns of water, meeting those falling from above, and rolling back in desolating torrents; witness the gathering dismay in every countenance; hear the universal shriek of despair; and see the world's last hope of life expire—men, women, and children, buried in one common sepulchre of water. And say, must not nature sink under the view. Look at a defaced and ruptured world, vegetation, with human and animal creation, swept from its face. Where now is that beautiful creation which God himself pronounced “very good;” to which angels said, amen, shouting for joy, and man assented? What has excited all this anger in heaven, that it should thus repent the Creator of his workmanship, and lead him to destroy its beauty, and waste its life? The reason is given, and doubtless it must be sufficient, even for such an unaccountable event. The wickedness of man was great upon the earth. It was sin, that prolific evil, which first desolated Paradise, and then the world; which first drove the race out of the garden, and then into the *deep*. O sin! what hast thou done? Would that these were the end of sorrows. But having destroyed one world twice, and holding it in reserve for a third and final conflagration, wilt thou proceed to satisfy thy revenge on what remains of it—man in a future and second existence? If thy claims cannot be satisfied with water, may they not be with blood? This is the only hope against a second deluge—the rainbow of the covenant.



## REMARKS.

A great cause leading to this catastrophe, was the apostasy of the Church. 2. This destruction was not brought upon the world without notice, and timely warning given for repentance. 3. Their destruction was of themselves: they might have prepared an ark. Some, had they been like minded, might have entered with Noah. They were not shut out, until after he was shut in. But they looked upon the preparation as folly, until the flood came. So it is with sinners still. "My spirit shall not always strive," is as emphatical now as then. But, the righteous need not fear the wreck of nature. Though there is but one righteous man in the population of earth, he rides safely on the top of the flood. He is saved by *faith*, so must you.

## LECTURE III.

### DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

"Then the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."—GEN. 19: 24, 25.

There are two classes of mankind in error in reference to miraculous interposition. One class, who have such firm confidence in the established order of nature, as to be unwilling, on any testimony, to believe that it is ever interrupted. The other, that the order of things is liable to perpetual changes, on trivial occasions, and for insufficient reasons. The one class are so tenacious of upholding the uniformity of nature's operations, that they not only deny that miraculous changes have taken place since the laws of nature were put in motion at first, but pretend that the processes of nature are so unchangeable that they have not even had a beginning; but have been going on in an eternal progress of succession. By such minds, whatever Omnipotence there is, is ascribed to the laws of nature. Ever since they commenced (if they commenced at all) they hold on in their career, independent of any supreme agency, and prosecute their course with undeviating uniformity. But, if any deviation has taken place, it is at least incapable of being proved by testimony, and therefore, as a matter of knowledge, is to us the same as if it did not take place. But the other class, on the contrary, seem to regard the established

order of nature as held by so slight a tenure, as to be broken by the lightest touch. And every event in their own circumstances, which occurs a little out of the ordinary course of things, they are disposed to attribute to some extraordinary cause in the concealed movements of nature, to the direct interposition of God, or, to the agency of some supernatural being, good or bad. To minds of this over-credulous cast, and imaginations of this fanciful description, creation seems to be peopled with intermediate agents, who are constantly intermeddling with the established order of things, and disappointing with disasters, the best laid schemes. In such minds, the falling meteor, the blazing comet, or even the croaking of the night-hawk, or the ticking of the death-watch in the wall, are sufficient to awaken the most fearful apprehensions of a coming evil. To such persons, the fabric of nature appears to be hung together so loosely, that it may be unhinged by the slightest causes; and the appearance of some of the less frequent, but certainly established phenomena of nature, are regarded as portentous of some fatal derangement in the necessary order of things. The opposite extremes to which the different minds of men reach on this subject, is one instance illustrating the common tendency of the human mind on all subjects. True wisdom seldom leaves the marks of her footsteps on the extreme limits of things; but her pathway is truly described, as leading in the "midst of the paths of judgment." The old maxim, "*Medium est optimum*," is as true in English as in Latin; and is as true now, as it was in olden time; and is as true of other things, as of the things of religion; and which the ultraism of the

present age makes necessary should be republished, with more than the authority of Solomon. Wandering on either side of the straight line of truth may be equally fatal. Fixing in the mind the immovable belief, that the laws of nature cannot be suspended; indulging an excessive incredulity in regard to the historical testimony bearing witness to the fact, that the elements have been compelled to perform offices contrary to their natural tendencies, have led to all the gross results of Infidelity and Atheism. An error on the one side here, has brought withering into all the interests of human society in this world, and blasted all the prospects of mankind for the future. The indulgence of a too credulous spirit on the other hand, and being disposed to believe that the laws of nature may be set aside on any occasion, and for trivial causes, has been the fruitful mother of *superstition*, and has filled the Pagan world with unnecessary fears, unnecessary rites and ceremonies, and laid the foundation for false hopes for eternity, and weakened, or obliterated, correct views of the government of God. Even here, where the best opportunities are afforded for a proper faith and consistent, practice the one or the other of these sources of mischief, is constantly doing its work. The want of a becoming faith in the evidence of recorded facts which establish the truth of a Revelation from God, and the consequent practical *Infidelity* which marks the character of such multitudes under the Gospel; or on the other hand, leads to the superstitious fear, that demons may approach with every fall of night, to interrupt the government of God, or that ghosts of the departed may return, with power vastly augmented by their absence, to dis-



turb the habitations of the living; and what is much worse, leads men to rely for their acceptance with God on rites and outward forms, which exist apart from righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Miraculous events are discredited because of their strangeness. But if we regard God not only as the creator and preserver of the world, but, as he is also, the moral governor, we shall more naturally be led to remark, that it is more strange that he does not come forth more frequently to disturb the natural order of events, and make a *wicked world to feel* that they cannot sin with impunity; more strange, that the life of the first sinner was permitted to run on in the avenues of a comfortable existence for several hundred years, than that he, whose moral law he had broken, and let loose a torrent of evil upon a world, did not, contrary to the ordinary course of things, throw an obstruction into the current of life and stop it at once; more strange, that he who had just set in motion the harmonious machinery of the Universe, to be regulated by perfectly adjusted laws, to be the habitation of morally perfect beings, when the moral beauty of his workmanship was defaced, did not more *distinctly* interfere and destroy his physical workmanship—that he left so much of it perfect, to afford happiness still to the intelligent part of creation, who had done so much to spoil the whole; more strange, that, when the generations of men run on, with wickedness increasing like a torrent and inundating the world morally, and deepening century after century, God did not come forth *sooner* for the vindication of his government, and counteracting the uniform course of the

elements inundate it with a flood; more strange, that, when mankind had started again to populate the world from one man, upon the sepulchre of a former world, and with this perpetual monument of God's justice under their feet, he did not again come forth in terrible majesty for four hundred years, till the cities of the plain had reached such a pitch of unheard of wickedness, as that mankind ever afterward are to know and remember their sin, by having it called, in penal statutes, *Sodomy*, after the name of their chief city; more strange, that *now*, God is withholding his anger from wicked nations, and from *our own*, and keeping the stupendous mechanism of nature in such harmonious play, that sinners from year to year may riot on the product of its wonderful action, than that he should *now* come forth in his great power, and derange the workmanship, and leave the guilty to mourn; more strange, (I appeal to *your* consciences who have never sorrowed for violating God's moral law,) that you should live and be happy upon the product of a mighty physical economy, dependent on the harmonious conservation of many magnificent worlds, and you willingly, and continually, setting at naught God's moral economy, that your heart should move on in its wondrous play, through these years of forgetfulness, without missing one stroke in the incalculable number—that your lungs should so long puff the air, which you refuse to employ as the medium of prayer, or praise to him, who never for a moment has withheld the necessary supply;—is it not more strange, that miracles of judgment have been so rare, than that they have been at all? And is it not equally strange, that because judgment is God's strange

work, that he has been so slow to interfere with the laws of nature, productive of life and happiness—that this *very fact* should become a reason for disputing his government, and of doubting whether he means to punish sinners hereafter.

This disposition that would keep God out of view in the government of nations, and especially a God that would punish them for their sins, has been before us in the work of the interpretation of this remarkable event. And the effort has been made, to account for it altogether by the operation of natural causes. It has been assigned to *lightning*, to *earthquake*, to *volcano*, to all these powerful agents combined. The region, it is said, gives abundant evidence of being impregnated with bituminous, inflammable matter of which Moses gives intimation by the mention of the slime pits. It is also said to bear evident marks of a volcanic region. The lightning falling upon the inflammable matter, with which the valley abounded, and inflaming it, entered the fissures of the earth, until reaching the hidden stores below, produced *earthquake*, and volcanic eruption, throwing the burning lava on high, which fell as a shower of burning brimstone upon the devoted cities. At the same time the earthquake sunk the valley, and the Jordon flowing in to fill up the space, made the Dead Sea.

Whatever causes may be admitted, in the explanation of this extraordinary event, doubtless, we are not to exclude the immediate agency of God. To this Moses at once, without any philosophizing, ascribes it. And this is a grand difference between the spirit of the Bible, and a certain modern spirit, which is too common. The inspired writers see a God in every event which befell a nation, or over-

turned a city. The spirit of an unwise philosophy would see a God no where. In accomplishing the submersion of this devoted valley, electricity, the volcano, and the earthquake, may have combined their forces, with tremendous power; but it was at the bidding of Jehovah, and at the appointed instant that Lot had made his escape. These fearful agents may have united their influence to raise this fiery tempest; but it was God who rode upon the storm, and directed the whirlwind. The sulphurous matter may have abounded in the sites of these cities; but it was moral, and not physical causes—the wickedness of the inhabitants, not the inflammable nature of the soil—which brought the angel visitors, those ministers whom God made a flame of fire for their destruction, and to this day makes it bear the evident marks of a withering curse.

The narrative may lead us to the following practical remarks:

1. Of what enormous wickedness human nature is capable.

The memory of the world's destruction must have yet been fresh in their recollection, yet they exceed their predecessors in crime. Punishment will not reform the heart. Grace, and not wrath, must do it.

2. Sinners are often nearest destruction when they least expect it.

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. As it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be when the Son of man cometh. When they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh.



## LECTURE IV.

### MIRACLES OF EGYPT.

“When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.”—Exodus 7: 9—12.

In the period of two thousand five hundred years in the history of the world from the creation, we have noticed only two miraculous events; but here, for a season, they seem to be more frequent than ordinary events. A new era was about to be introduced, and God was to communicate a revelation of his will to the world, in a written code of law, when the Church was to be more particularly separated from the world, and distinguished with more particular blessings. To usher in, and authenticate this new dispensation, it was necessary that the proof, that it was from God, should be indubitable. For this purpose, a series of astonishing miracles was introduced. These served the doubled purpose, of satisfying the Hebrews that Moses acted under a divine commission, and spoke to them the words of God; and of proving to the heathen that Jehovah was the true God, controlled the elements of nature, and managed, as he pleased, the affairs of nations. To answer the first of these objects, when Moses

answered the Lord, commanding him to go to Egypt for the deliverance of his people: "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." The Lord directed him to cast the rod, or shepherd's staff, which he had in his hand upon the ground. He did so, and it became a serpent. He was commanded to put forth his hand, and take it, he did so, and it became a rod in his hand. This was done, that they might believe that the Lord God of their fathers had appeared unto him. If they would not believe by this miracle, he was to give a second evidence, by his hand becoming leprous and being restored. If this still did not satisfy them, he was to take the water of the river and pour it upon the dry land, and it was to become blood. In this way, ample provision was made to satisfy the Hebrews, that Moses was divinely commissioned to be their prophet and deliverer. God never requires of mankind a blind and unreasonable obedience, but always affords evidence sufficient to satisfy a reasonable expectation, that the authority of God is in the command, and that which is required to be done, is proper in itself so that disobedience may be always left without excuse.

The evidence of the first sign, was to be given to Pharaoh also, to show him that Moses was acting under the authority of God, in the demand which he made for the deliverance of the people. It seemed to be presumed, that Pharaoh had a right to expect this proof of authority accompanying the command, and that expectation was to be answered. The world has a right to expect that God would accompany his requirements with such evidence as

should satisfy them, that God did speak to them: but when this is given, if they refuse to comply with it, they must bear the sin and the punishment. Moses and Aaron, therefore, did as they were commanded, "and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent." Pharaoh, in making the demand for a miracle, was not influenced by the desire of being convinced, but more probably from the hope that they could not perform it. And that thus he might have a reasonable excuse for his refusal. So it is often with rebellious minds. They ask for proof of revelation, or of a particular truth, or duty which is urged upon their attention, not so much from the desire of believing or doing it, as from the hope, that by finding some flaw in the evidence, they may escape the force of the obligation. And when the proof is complete, they still seek some means of weakening it, that they may indulge in courses more agreeable to their depraved inclinations.

At first the excuse is, a want of evidence to their understanding, while the true difficulty is, an aversion of the will and affections. And when all necessary light is poured upon the understanding, the will remains immovable. They say they want light, when in fact, they want will. And having light, and not will. they are, righteously, subject to punishment.

This first miracle was addressed to the sight of the Egyptians, and not designed to produce pain; and was, therefore, in a situation to be the better contemplated by the understanding, that the proper moral argument might be derived from it. Though it was not a plague in itself, it might have been

regarded as ominous of distress. If it did not inflict pain, it looked as though it might; and at its first appearance, even Moses, himself, fled from it. If it did not make Pharaoh feel, it might have made him fear. Though he did not feel the effects of its malignant poison, contemplating it might have led him to suspect it possible he should. If so destructive a reptile could be so strangely, and so suddenly made out of so inoffensive a thing as a staff, there was reason to fear the power which could do that, might soon turn all his enjoyments into poison and death; that he who could turn a rod, the emblem of regal power, into a viper, if *he* continued in disobedience, might turn his stately dominion, on which he leaned with confidence, into the fangs of a serpent to him; that the sceptre with which he ruled, as with an iron rod, so many oppressed subjects of his kingdom, if he refused to withdraw it, might turn upon himself with vengeance; that if he refused to contemplate it aright, and improve by what was addressed calmly to his consideration, he might be made to feel what he refused to take timely warning to avoid. God first addresses the reason of mankind, before he punishes them. He first persuades, before he hurts. He gives them time to look at the import of the present dispensation, before he brings another—to anticipate the coming evil, and avoid it, before it is inflicted.

He who properly regards what is addressed to him as a being capable of reasoning, will not be punished as a being that would not be governed by his reason. He that rules himself by the evidence of what he sees of the divine will, shall not suffer for what he has not seen, and refuses to regard. But



Pharaoh refused to be taught by what he saw, he, therefore, had to be taught by what he felt. He was unwilling to believe that the rod of Moses, that changed into a serpent, was more sovereign than his sceptre, or that it would affect his authority; therefore, he hardened his heart against God, and prepared himself for the contest. And it was now to be seen, in awful combat, who should prevail; God and Moses on the one side, Pharaoh and the Magicians on the other. The shepherd of Midian, at the head of an oppressed and defenceless people, are now at issue with a haughty tyrant, having the command of a powerful nation. The Church is to emerge from Egyptian despotism, or be lost in the darkness of her gloomy superstition. Jehovah is to be known as the God of Israel, or the reptiles of Egypt are to bear sway, and be adored. The Magicians of Egypt are to be the oracles of wisdom, and teach the world religion, or the prophets of the Lord are to confound them. God, or the Devil, is to receive the homage of the intelligent creation, which God made for his honor. The Church is to be established on a firmer basis, to advance with progressive light, till the Messiah come, or to be extinguished in an idolatrous world. A system of special institutions was to be given for the instruction and salvation of men, to which these miracles were to give validity, which were to remain until superseded by the more perfect economy of the Gospel. This economy, of which the miracles of Egypt were the introductory seal, must be established with unequivocal evidence. If the divine mission, and inspiration of Moses would rest upon doubtful evidence, the authority of the New Testament dispensation must also fail of being

established. The two economies are intimately connected, and the latter built upon the former, so that Christ could say, If ye believe Moses' writings, ye will believe my words, for he wrote of me. A prophet the Lord was to raise up unto them like unto Moses, whom they should hear in all things, on the penalty of being cut off from the people. If the prophetic character of Moses was not fully established, neither is the Messianism of Christ. A failure in one link of the lengthened chain of evidence, would let down the whole, and prostrate the hopes of the christian world. A mighty result, therefore was depending on the success of the Mosiac miracles, at the court of Pharaoh, and upon the certainty of the proof by which they are established.

As might be expected, a mission pregnant with such results—events which were to have a bearing upon the history of the world, upon the temporal and eternal destiny of unborn millions, in a world as wicked as this—would not be permitted to take place without a struggle—facts, so materially effecting the kingdom of darkness, and benefitting the race, to pass unnoticed, and unopposed by the great adversary of the race.

No sooner does Moses present the credentials of his mission, to the Egyptian king, than he is encountered by the magicians, those great ministers of state, in the kingdom of Satan, that the evidence might be weakened, or overthrown. Could they have fully succeeded in this attempt, it would have been as fatal to the christian system, as if Christ had not been victorious in his temptation, or had not been raised from the grave according to his prediction.

But, though the religion of the Bible has been

the object of the most cunning and violent attack, ever since it commenced its transient residence on earth, it has always, when fairly brought to the trial, clearly proved its celestial origin, and left its opposers in confusion. Like the Egyptian wise men, they may have had a momentary triumph, only to be sunk the deeper in disgrace. When elevated at all to the hope of success, it has only been to mark more distinctly their fall. "They cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents." A triumphant imitation it was thought for the moment. But, behold! Aaron's rod swallowed them up. Where now, is the argument? Beaten to nothing. Yet, it serves to cherish the scepticisms of the Egyptian beholders; because they wished to be unconvinced. A counterfeit of religious truth, or practice, is eagerly seized by those who would live in sin, to ward off the force of truth, and keep the conscience in peace. But, if Pharaoh will not be convinced by ample evidence addressed to his sight, and will harden his heart in the face of evidence, he must be touched in a more sensitive point—the river Nile must be turned into blood. This afforded the whole supply of water for Egypt. This was giving them blood to drink in great measure. The magicians, on a small scale, did something, by their art, like it. But if they undertook to compete with Moses, on the grand scale of miraculous power, why did they not restore the river to its purity? This would have been something worthy of an effort. The fourth miracle they acknowledged was beyond their power to imitate, and confessed that the power of God was concerned in it, and left the field to be occupied by Moses, without dispute. What

was really done by these magicians, is a matter about which there are different opinions. Some think that they wrought real miracles, by the power of Satan, God permitting it, for the higher proof of his own power and truth, in the end. Others, that they practiced a deception upon the senses, as it is said they did so with their *enchantments*. But whatever was done by them, the result was more conclusive on the side of truth, than if there had been no opposition. So it has always been with the evidence of the christian system. It has strengthened by the combat, and been enriched by the spoils of the enemy. The opposing priest-hoods of false religions have always been the most difficult to overcome, and do most to keep the mass of the people in ignorance of the truth. It was so in Egypt. Had it not been for them, the people, and Pharaoh himself, would have yielded sooner. It is so now in India, in China, and in all heathen countries. It is so in all popish countries, and heretical sects among protestants. But, encouragement is afforded on the page of prophecy, that as the religious counselors, and the leaders of the people of Egypt left the contest before half the evidence was presented, and the true church was left to an undisputed victory, so it will be in the history of the world. And "the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High."

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#### REMARKS.

The miracles of Egypt afford an instructive and impressive lesson, to individuals and nations, to obey God, and do their duty, in whatever he has clearly made known his will.



1. Because if they do not, they must be punished, and the punishment increased in proportion to the light afforded, and the determination and length of the resistance. This he will do, if all nature must be subverted.

2. The exhaustless storehouses of vengeance, God can draw upon for humbling his enemies, and sustaining his cause. Even every *blessing* can be turned into a *resistless scourge*.



## LECTURE V.

### PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left."—GEN. 14: 21, 22.

The miracles of the Old Testament history, so far as they have yet come under our notice, have been of the most sublime and magnificent description—The creation of the world, the destruction of its living inhabitants, and the disruption of its material structure,—the overwhelming of the abandoned cities of the plain, and the laying waste of the wealth, the beauty, and the life of Egypt, the cradle of science, and humbling her proud monarch by a series of unparalleled miraculous adversities. The miracles of Christ have more the aspect of benevolence; these more the aspect of judgment. The miracles of the New Testament were more for the relief of individual suffering; these for national relief. When a miracle of the New Testament produced misery upon the subject of it, it was usually to an individual only; but here, a whole city, a nation, or the world, is made to feel it. This aspect of the miracles of this period, may be in correspondence with the difference of the administration of the government of God in the church, in these two periods of time. In the first, God's government was more by law, and the execution

of corporeal penalties; in the last, more by spiritual motives, and the influence of grace upon the soul. Then the fear of temporal distress was more addressed in order to secure obedience; now the fear of future punishment, and the hope of future rewards, in order to restrain from sin and lead to a life of faith. Then mankind were impelled more by authority; now they are more drawn by kindness. If the miracles of the New Testament, in conformity with the dispensation, have more in them to impress us with the love of God, and draw us as with the chords of love; the miracles of the Mosaic history, in conformity with the dispensation, have more to impress us with the power and justice of God, and to lead us to fear to offend that power, before which, offending, we cannot stand. As the miracles of the New Dispensation, agreeing to its gracious influences, were wrought upon individuals, rather than upon whole nations; so the miracles of the Old Dispensation, agreeing more with the grace of it, were wrought in behalf of whole communities at once. As the force of the evidence of the ancient miracles could not be resisted without exposing to national and individual calamity, much less can the light of the evidence of both be resisted, without exposing to a greater calamity. If they who sinned under Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment shall he be accounted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the blood of the Son of God, and hath done despite to the Spirit of Grace. Yea, I say unto you, fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in *hell*. It is the prerogative of God, to effect the greatest and most

unlikely results, by feeble and improbable means. Who would have expected, in the beginning of this enterprise, for the deliverance of the sons of Jacob from the furnace of their affliction, to have seen their tribes freed so soon from the yoke of their oppressors, and on their triumphant march to the land of promise. A little while since, you saw a shepherd of Midian attending his flocks, and, at the command of God, issuing forth from the retirement of the mountains, without power, without favor, on an enterprise for the deliverance of a nation, which for four hundred and thirty years had been enslaved by the strong arms of a powerful nation. What would human foresight say of the folly of such an expedition? An old man of eighty, attended only by his brother of eighty-three, to influence two nations at once; the one to be willing to be made free, and the other to be willing to free them. The one to become the willing subjects of the government of God, and regulate their lives by his institutions; the other, so far to submit to the revealed will of God, as to be willing to permit them. All that weak, ignorant, and erring man can know, is a few of the small objects, which are immediately around him, and of these, only a few of their more obvious qualities and relations. At one place we are dazzled by an excess of light, at another we are distressed, and repulsed by dimness and obscurity. The sun forbids us to behold his face, by reason of his splendor, and the earth, and ocean, permit us to look at their surface only. In the lapse of a few years, we lose sight of the past, while the future is impenetrable to our vision. Open prospect after prospect, and add faculty to faculty, still we find ourselves limited and

hemmed in, by a hedge and depth still beyond, which the understanding of an angel cannot fathom. God alone can "declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet come, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." God, who has the knowledge to predict, has also the power to accomplish the most unlooked for events. "He had said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Upon how many unforeseen contingencies does the fulfillment of this depend? Jacob has not yet returned with savory meat, to supplant his brother. Joseph's coat, that excited the envy of his brothers, is not yet woven. The famine, which took Jacob's sons to Egypt, is far remote, dependent upon the movement of many a cloud, and the varying state of many an atmosphere. The decree of Pharaoh, to put to death the male children of the Hebrews, is among the hidden things of the unknown future. The rushes have not yet grown, of which the little basket is to be made, to save the future law-giver of Israel, in the waters of the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter, his adopted mother, is yet to be born, before the education of the deliverer commences. And after all these preliminary steps take place in the course of an ordinary, contingent, yet certain providence, God has to come forth in the majesty of miraculous events, and the shepherd's crook of Moses is to be changed into a venomous reptile; the waters of Egypt are to change their qualities



into a sea of blood; the frogs of the marshes are to be multiplied, and pour forth their hosts in the chambers of Egypt's princes; the magicians are to be baffled in a fair trial of supernatural skill, and submit to the power of God; the cattle of the field are to fall under incurable disease; the locusts are to be congregated upon the field of Zoan; and darkness intolerable is to shut out the last ray of day from the subjects of the oppressor: and finally, the angel of death, at midnight, is to leave every house in mourning for the first born. All this, and more, had to be done by voluntary agents, and by a sovereign God, before it was said, "It came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it come to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." So wonderfully do miracles of knowledge, and miracles of power co-operate, and prove each other true. So firmly do these two pillars of the christian faith support the superstructure which is built upon them. No unforeseen event can prevent the one; no resistance can prevent the other.

But, a providence often mysterious to us, seems frequently to counteract its own most wonderful doings. Now, when the church is delivered from the oppression of a tyrannical, civil power, by a series of unheard of interpositions, and is on her march to the land of her free institutions and solemn rites; and under the direction too, of an angel guide, they are turned out of the direct course into a crooked and impassable way, till they approach the Red Sea, and are hedged in on each side by untrodden mountains. Pharaoh, too, having repented that he yielded so easily to a demand which was robbing him of so many faithful subjects, and



so much of his income and national wealth, had collected his forces in haste, was hard pursuing and about to overtake them in this unfavorable place, where they could neither defend themselves, go forward, nor flee. Had they gone the straight course to Canaan, from Rameses, they would not have touched the Red Sea, nor have been entangled by these mountains; why, then, does the miraculous pillar itself, the emblem of the divine presence, lead them into this difficulty? Because difficulties are to be met, and overcome in the way of duty, is not of itself sufficient proof that we are wrong. If we only have the evidence, that we are following the direction of the command, we may rely with confidence upon divine protection and assistance. If God has led us in a way which brings us into difficulty, we may hope that his light and shade will not forsake us. And if God has done many and great things for us heretofore, we may be sure, if we continue to trust him, that he will not lose all his own work for us, and thus suffer his own honor to be brought into question. Every special act, which God does for his people, is a pledge that he will do for them, that which remains to be done. His honor, then, becomes one with their interest, so that his promise cannot fail. His people would not so much realize their dependence, or praise him for his goodness, if they were never made to feel that there is no other helper: and the more complete the difficulty, the more will be the praise. That trial, which in the prospect may seem to be the destruction of our hopes, may be the means of invigorating them. That road which to us seems meandering through a sea, and a desert, may, after all, not only be the nearest, but the only way to

heaven. Your enemies, which closely pursue you, may be most effectually overcome, when you most expected to fall by their hands; and your best songs of praise may arise from events which you dreaded most.

But, in difficulty, and even with the presence of God to guide and encourage you, you are not to give up yourselves to despondency and inaction. At this crisis, when Israel was encompassed with difficulty, when human policy was at an end, part of them, against all reason and propriety, and only to increase the distress, began to fault Moses for bringing them from the land of their bondage. However unkind, and unreasonable this was, it is a fair specimen of human nature. How often is it, that those who have most of the responsibility, and do most for the benefit of others, are blamed for their best and most benevolent acts. Especially is this the case, when things do not seem to proceed prosperously. But Moses, and the better part, were acting more wisely. In this emergency, they betook themselves to prayer to God, from whom alone relief could come. This is the natural resort of the christian in trouble. He casts his burdens upon the Lord, and he sustains them. But even in this he may err. He may be satisfying himself with this, when he should be doing something else, and his devotion must be interrupted by a voice directing him to another duty. Wherefore, saith the Lord unto Moses, "criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Important as prayer is, it will not do to substitute it in the place of other duties. There is a time for the church to go forward and exemplify every good work, as well as to be on her knees. Had

Moses and his associates, continued in prayer only, they would have been made prisoners by Pharaoh. Having looked to God for help, he must prove his sincerity by trying to help himself. God does not help the idle. Moses must stretch his rod over the sea, and he, with the people, must march. Though their salvation was of God, it was not on that, but on the other side of the sea, and by marching through it, it was to be secured. If you are to share God's salvation, you must obey his commands. Moses proves his faith, by his obedience. He stretches the sovereign rod over the sea. It obeys, and opens a highway upon its untrodden channel for the hosts of the Lord. Its watery side-walls mark the course. The luminous cloud scatters the darkness. By the morning light they find themselves safely landed on the further shore, and praise their God in a morning song. Pharaoh and his host pursuing, the water closes up, the way upon them, and they are swept to the shore dead men.

Several methods have been employed to impeach the credibility of this narrative, which, however, instead of effecting the object, have afforded so many grounds for the triumph of truth.

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#### REMARKS.

1. We may regard this event as an emblem and pledge of the final triumph of truth over error, and of the Church over all her enemies. (Rev. 15: 2—4.)
2. As illustrating the union of Almighty aid and believing effort, in accomplishing this grand result.
8. As encouraging every individual to go forward

in the way of obedience, whatever obstacles may be in the way.

4. As affording certainty that the disobedient, and rebellious, shall at last be subdued by the Almighty, however long they persevere in resistance.



## LECTURE VI.

### WATERS OF MARAH.

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore, the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying: What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters."—Exodus, 15: 23—27.

The doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty, though not agreeable to human feelings, is yet a truth, which is clearly taught. It is presented to us, not only in didactic statements, but also, in historical description; not only on the pages of sacred history, but in profane; as well as in the every day observation of common life. This truth is clearly seen, not only in national distinction, but in individual history; not only in the varied bestowments of spiritual gifts; but also of temporal blessings. Wherever we look with a discerning eye, we see manifest proofs, that there is a God that ruleth in the armies of heaven, and doeth his pleasure upon earth. He exalteth one, and casteth down another, and giveth the earth, which is his, to the children of men, fixing the bounds of the nations at his will, and no one, in soberness, pretends, that he has a right to



dispute his will. The evidence of this truth, is seen with advantage in the history of the children of Jacob.

Why were they selected as the objects of God's special favor; and their history made so conspicuous, by divine interpositions? Why were they placed upon such an elevation, that all the world beside, in that, and every subsequent age, have had to look to the Hebrews, for law, and for gospel, for the knowledge necessary to live comfortably here, and for the wisdom needed for a happy life hereafter? Was there any thing of superior excellence in their moral nature, which qualified them to give lessons to the world, and bring the wisest of all other nations to their feet, for instruction? Why is their history so peculiarly marked with Jehovah's foot-steps, that if we would learn distinctly, the edicts of the Legislator of the world, or the terms on which he will treat with offenders under his government, we must take our lessons of highest learning, from Jewish history. No other appropriate answer can be given, than that of Christ, in another case: "even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

And if God can confer national privileges, without giving ground for unfavorably impeaching his justice, or attributing to him, a partial administration; why may he not do the same thing to individuals? And if he may make an unequal distribution of temporal gifts, why may he not, of spiritual?

Had Israel laid God under any obligations, to do for them what he did? It will be readily answered, no. Did he do any wrong to other nations, in doing what he did for them? It will be as readily answered in the same way? How, then, does it come, that God may confer special privileges upon

a community of individuals, without meriting a complaint against his sovereignty; while, if he is regarded as bestowing special favor upon an individual, the objection of partiality must be considered as in full force? How is it, that God can be a respecter of persons, on a great scale, without fault, while he cannot do it on a small scale, without fault. That he may have respect to a whole community, as compared with another, without wrong, in the view of certain reasoners, while he cannot have respect to an individual, without wrong. In the view of such minds, God may be a sovereign over men in the mass; but loses this character over man, as an individual. He may bestow national grace; but, he cannot, without impeaching his administration, bestow individual grace. How this difference comes, is not easily seen. The answer to the questions, "who maketh thee to differ, and what hast thou, that thou hast not received?"—may be as easily, and fairly given in an individual, as in a national case, and so far as the rectitude of the divine government is concerned, as properly in reference to spiritual, as to temporal benefactions. The truth being in each case, so far as sinners, and even the best of the men of this world are concerned, in conferring good upon them; that it is not the justice, but the sovereignty of God that is employed. If justice only, was consulted, misery would be the entire effect. If Israel, the favored people, had laid a plan, and made their calculation, to have proved to the world, their unworthiness of the distinguished goodness conferred upon them, it would seem as if they could not have accomplished it better than they did. And if God had designed to give an exhibition to the world of his sovereignty, in the bestow-

ment of his favors; of his benevolence, in lavishing kindness upon the unworthy; and of long suffering patience, in not consuming the ungrateful, no people could have been more properly selected, upon whom to display these attributes. But, even in the instability and ungratefulness of their character, they are a fair specimen, more or less applicable to every individual case, upon whom a gracious God condescends to bestow special favor, so that instances, even among the saved, will never be found, in whom their goodness has been in advance of God's kindness to them; and become a meritorious reason, why God should so have regarded them; and in this way, a foundation is laid for securing the praise of all our salvation to a sovereign God, saying, "not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truths' sake. Unto him that loved us, and washed us in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." What a contrast in the circumstances and feelings of the people, is here seen, to that, which they shewed three days before. Then you see them in a magnificent musical concert, filling the shore of the Red Sea. The occasion was peculiar—calculated to produce the mingled emotions of terror and gratitude. They gave utterance to their feelings, in a most sublime and appropriate sacred song, the oldest poetical composition in the world; and all the proficient in the art, have never excelled this first specimen. The music was adapted to the words, and the performers to the music: on one side, Moses leading the lower notes of manly voices, on the other, Miriam, in sweet accord, blending the softer harmony of female strains, with the notes of the

timbrel, in praise of their great Deliverer; an emblem of a still future, and yet more interesting scene, when the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. But till that long looked for period arrive, there is more to be done than to delight the ear with the softest harmony, and chant the notes of victory over a vanquished enemy. In the season of the convert's espousals to his Redeemer, or of the church's peculiar blessing, when her God is in her of a truth, and makes the place of his footsteps glorious, she may feel she has nothing more to do, than to experience and give utterance to joyful emotion, and say with the disciples on the mount of transfiguration, "It is good to be here." Let us make tabernacles to remain. But the toil of the vale below is not to be done on the mount. His Lord has work for Peter to do. He has other ways for him to glorify him, besides reposing in the displays of his transfiguration. He can do this better, though not easier, on a cross, than on the mount. The christian's business, though more agreeable, is not so much to sing the song of victory over vanquished spiritual foes, as to go on to further conquest; not so much to number the steps he has taken, as to calculate the distance he has yet to go; not so much to solace himself with excessive joy in present attainments, as to press on to higher; not to think, because he to-day has a clear sky and a serene heaven, that to-morrow it may not be overcast with clouds. Though one important difficulty may be overcome, and it is his privilege to rejoice in it; yet he is to calculate, that another still



remains, and to prepare for it, so that when it comes he may endure it without repining. The possession of Canaan is not always the next step to our escape from Egypt. Justification by the grace of God, puts us beyond the reach of our enemies to destroy us, and adoption makes good our title to the inheritance of the saints in light, but it is sanctification that makes us meet for the purchased possession. After many a discouraging effort, Israel made their way to the Red Sea. But there their way seemed completely stopped, till God opened the passage. So the candidate for the heavenly land, before the chains of his native state of captivity to sin are broken, makes many efforts to come to the Redeemer, till at last, hedged in on every side, he is shut up to the faith of the Gospel, and made to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Deliverance having been wrought for him, in an unexpected way, his soul is filled with thankfulness, and his lips with praise. All the enemy that was in sight having been vanquished, he cannot realize the fact, that there are others in the rear. But the burying of his past sins in the sea of God's forgetfulness, by an act of justifying mercy, is only the commencement of his heavenly progress. He is not yet taught the deceitfulness of sin. He is yet to be disciplined by many preparatory, and, it may be, irksome lessons, for the higher school of heaven. For this purpose, he must go out from the shore, and try the wilderness; and to his shame and sorrow, he often finds it does not take long to prove what is in his heart. The language of the poet describes his case—

“But ere one fleeting hour is past,  
The flattering world employs



Some sensual bait to seize my taste,

And to pollute my joys."

And of the bitter waters of Marah succeeding the song to the Red Sea, he says:

"Then I repent and vex my soul,

That I should leave thee so ;

Where will those wild affections rove,

That let a Savior go.?"

The first difficulty Israel meets with after leaving the scene of God's astonishing interposition in their behalf, and their joyful celebration of it, the people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink." What was unpleasant water to being delivered from the brick-kilns of Egypt, when they were to have it only for a single encampment! Look, too, at the impiety of laying the blame on Moses, when God, and not Moses, was their conductor, and in the most convincing manner had just proved himself so, in dividing the sea, which they had so beautifully acknowledged in their hymn of praise. Had not the wondrous pillar, which had illuminated their highway through the deep, marked the place of their encampment? The heart is not only ungrateful, but attempts to escape the appearance of it, by charging what is deficient upon the creature. It has not the bravery to charge it at once upon God. But against him it is made. Did not God make these waters what they were, and did he not lead the people to them? Is your condition in life what Providence, or duty made it? or is that trial one to which the cloudy pillar has conducted you? Blame not the second causes, for in so doing you murmur against God. But what gives rise to all this sound of murmur, which you hear from the abodes even of the can-

didates for heaven? What gives rise to all this chiding by the way? Brackish water for a night. And have they not much common and special good beside, and hope soon to be put in possession of what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard? Yes; but there is one slight inconvenience for the present, and all beside must be undervalued, or forgotten. Oblige an ungrateful person ever so often, and disappoint him once, and the memory of a thousand benefits is instantly lost. All that Moses, or God has done, is forgotten the moment a little bitter water is tasted. Nothing possessed is of any account, while one thing is wanting. One unpalatable drink obliterates all the wonders of Egypt, and the more recent miracles of the Red Sea. Is this the history of ancient ingratitude, or is it the history of *thine*? But, observe the goodness of God. More ready to listen to the entreaties of Moses, than to punish the perverseness of the people. And he instantly directs him to a cure for these unpleasant waters. It has been made a subject of inquiry, whether there was any miracle in this? and whether there was not something in the quality of this wood to effect the remedy. The answer to this inquiry is not of great importance. We incline to this opinion,—that it was merely a sign without efficacy in itself: as the spittle and the clay used by Christ, or the rod by Moses. But, what a state of mind did the people show for such another interposition? Truly God delighteth in mercy, and in magnifying his grace. You will derive advantage from the contemplation of this subject.

1. By cherishing a sense of the importance of being governed by a steady and fixed principle.

Neither being over elated with the good, nor distressed with the ills of life. They are set against each other, and neither of long continuance. Man without the government of his feelings, by principle, or the christian, if he does not walk by faith, is like the mercury in the tube of the thermometer, varying with every change of the wind.

2. By avoiding a repining spirit. You will accomplish this by considering, 1. How little you deserve. 2. How much you receive. 3. By accommodating your desires to your condition. 4. By considering the shortness of your pilgrimage.

## LECTURE VII.

### MANNA.

“And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.”—Exodus 16: 13—15.

In the plan of a comprehensive providence, God often seems to lay himself under an obligation to answer a demand, which the necessity of his own arrangements has created. The human constitution might have been so arranged, as not to be under the necessity of being sustained by a constant recurrence to food. What occurred to the Savior in human nature, and to Moses on Sinai, when they lived without inconvenience forty days, without the nourishment necessary to support our dependent nature in ordinary circumstances, could, with equal ease, have been made the common experience of the race. But in the organization of our natures, God has made it otherwise. Not only our comfort, but our present *existence*, depends upon the regular supply of food. To meet this necessity, which God himself has produced, there is an evident provision made in the very structure of physical nature herself. In the laws of the great economy of the heavens, and the earth, in the wonderful adaptation of means to produce certain results, there is manifest evidence of a design to



support our dependent nature in the manner in which our experience teaches us it must be supported. That this necessary supply be regularly afforded to the world's population, it is not only indispensable that nature continue her customary uniformity on the surface of the earth, that vegetable life continue its usual fruitfulness, and the animal tribes their productiveness; but that this may be the case, all the laws of the great system of worlds, with which our own globe itself stands intimately connected, must be preserved in exact and uniform operation. One slight derangement, an hundred million of miles distant, might effect and destroy the entire productiveness of the earth, and leave all its inhabitants to pine and perish in want. A complete system of dependency prevails through the entire workmanship of God, so far as known to us, both in physical and spiritual nature; so that a thought cannot be originated, without the concurrent will of him who gave to mind its being, or a shock of wheat matured, if the sun, ninety-five millions of miles distant, refuses to shine upon it. Why, then, has the Creator established such a wonderfully complex, and, apparently, laborious mechanism, for the accomplishment of an end, when so far as man's sustenance was concerned, it could have been effected without it? The wisdom of God is seen in effecting more than a single end, by the means which he sees proper to employ. The air which we breathe, is also the medium of sounds which we hear; the means of navigating the ocean below us, and the mighty vehicle of carrying it above us, and pouring it out in due proportions upon every hill and valley on the thirsty earth. The same sun which warms into maturity

the vegetable grain that feeds us, gives us light to see the varied beauties with which the Creator has decked his workmanship, and at the same time holds our earth, with all her sister planets, in their exact proportions in the immensity of space, with such a force that a world in rapid flight cannot compel him to yield a hair's breadth in a thousand revolutions. This wonderful economy, by which God feeds his dependent creation, is designed to answer many other important purposes beside feeding the hungry, and giving drink to the thirsty—purposes which could never have been answered, if we had been so formed, as never to feel these sensations. In this way we are taught our dependence, and are led to thankfulness. Through the means by which a supply is afforded, the infinite power, and boundless benevolence of the Creator, are seen; and the material nature is made a prompter to becoming moral feelings; and unconscious laws, and unthinking matter, become the theatre of spiritual praise. This causing, or permitting difficulties to exist, which seem to embarrass the grand design, (which may be a peculiarity in the plans of God,) is distinctly seen in this narrative of the journey of the church from Egypt to the land of promise, and has been brought against its credibility, by the opposers of its truth. It is asked, "Why this wandering in the deserts of Arabia forty years, when they could have gone in four days, without passing the Red Sea, or starving in the wilderness?" When we judge of the divine procedure by our limited views, we are ever liable to err. Moses might have conducted them by a much nearer route to Canaan. But unarmed as they were, and their spirits broken by long servitude, they were not in

a condition to contend with the warlike Philistines, who would have disputed their passage. They might have been led by a nearer way, but you would have heard nothing of the pillar of cloud, and the angel of God's presence going before them; nothing of the dividing of the Red Sea, and their preservation by those watery walls, which destroyed their enemies; nothing of God sending down manna upon them, and giving them food from heaven: flesh as thick as dust, and feathered fowls like the sand of the sea; nothing of his descent upon Mount Sinai, when he bowed the heavens and came down, and darkness was under his feet when he rode upon the cherubim, and did fly—and came flying upon the wings of the wind. This was the scene which God had selected for the display of his almighty power and goodness. As they were to be put in possession of distinguished blessings, they were to be prepared for them, by a proper course of preparatory discipline. A moral law, for the government of the world, was to be promulged, or man live in perpetual disregard of his obligations. The primary lessons of the gospel were to be taught, or the nations continue to die without hope. The fundamental principle of human government, and political law, must be taught the race, or they would never understand and practice aright the relative duties, and the blessings of free, civil institutions never be enjoyed. For the purpose of instructing the world in these great and essential principles, so intimately connected with man's present and eternal happiness, with his individual and social interest, it was worth detaining Israel forty years on the journey, especially, when God himself undertook to bear

their expenses, to feed and clothe them, and give them drink. These great arrangements for giving law and gospel to the world, for the establishment of civil and ecclesiastical government, could be better attended to in these circumstances, when the people had nothing else to do—when they were freed from worldly cares, in a country where they had no home, and no interest, and were provided for by special divine interposition, than when they were settled in their own inheritance, and pressed with earthly care. Thus, as the production of a regular supply of natural food is connected with causes the most distant in the material system, and is connected with many beneficial results, both physical and moral, in the great kingdom of nature, of which, gratifying the appetite is among the smallest. So, supplying the camp of Israel with food, miraculously, had other objects in view, which were to have an influence, not only upon the Jewish nation in all their future history, but also to have an influence on the character of the world, both individually and nationally, in time and in eternity. When God, therefore, seems to throw embarrassments in the way of his own undertaking, it is for the production of some great result, for the display of his perfections, for the further revelation of his will, and for the good of man.

If we were to be the judges, Providence would usually be too slow, or too fast, and we are generally disposed to go before its leadings, or lag behind. Had we lived then, and knew that Israel was to be freed from Egypt, and that Moses was to do it, when we heard of his birth, we would have expected that the deliverance was at hand. But forty years revolve before Moses interposes at all,



and then only to avenge an individual wrong. Forty years more expire before he comes by a commission from heaven, and yet forty years more roll on, and Moses dies with the commission in his hand, and all the men that come out of Egypt with him, except two, make their graves in the wilderness, before the church inherits the promise. Let us learn not to run ahead of Providence, to effect what appears to us desirable, or be discouraged, and conclude that what God has encouraged us to expect will never be accomplished, because it seems to be long delayed. And let us not be discouraged because of difficulties in the accomplishment of a great and useful purpose. These may be a part of the original plan of Providence for important ends, which are to us at present unknown.

If God can overrule the evils which ungodly men, and wicked spirits throw in the way of his designs, how much more will he make the difficulties, which he himself interposes, contribute to good and great results. And in this view, the folly of repining at the dispensations of Providence at once appears, and will help us to understand what appears to be a mystery in the economy of grace—that all afflictive things shall work together for good to them who love God—that tribulations are a ground of glorying, and trials of rejoicing.

The miracle of these events appears, 1. In reference to the flesh which was provided, not, perhaps, in creating the quails which were furnished, but in directing them to their encampments at that particular time, according to promise, and the prediction of Moses. It was about the middle of April, when these birds are known to fly out

of Egypt across the Red Sea, in great quantities.

2. With reference to the manna, the miracle appears, 1. That it fell but six days in the week. 2. That it fell in such prodigious quantities, as to supply about three millions of people. 3. That there fell a double quantity on every sixth day. 4. That which was gathered the first five days, if preserved, stank, and bred worms, if kept over one day; but that which was gathered on the sixth day, would keep sweet two days; and that it continued falling during their abode in the wilderness. The quails appear to have been provided on this occasion only, but the manna forty years. We ask your attention with a view to personal profit to the following general

#### REMARKS:

1. You are justified in expecting the extraordinary, or gracious interposition of God in your behalf, only in reference to that which you cannot do yourselves—that which you cannot do in the most rational use of the means to do it. Man is prone to cast his *work*, not his *care* upon God. This listless and indolent disposition, often wants to call itself by the name of dependence on the goodness of *heaven*. We tempt God, instead of honoring him, when we cast our work upon him, instead of our dependence. Jehovah performs the wonders of his power and grace, not to save our exertions, but to do what we cannot. It was when Israel had no bread, and could not obtain it by their efforts, that God sent it. Divine power was not employed in putting it into their vessels, but in placing it within their reach. They must gather it, or still perish with hunger. What God does for

us in nature and grace, is not to keep us from effort, but to *excite* to it.

2. Learn your daily dependence. What God gives is not to be hoarded, but to be used. Hence the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." What is not needed corrupts. It is true, both of common and gracious gifts, God gives only for use. When no good use is designed to be made of it, it is not to be expected. Beyond this, the gold corrupts, the garments become moth-eaten, and the rust of what is improperly stored becomes as a burning canker. The soul prospers by a daily expenditure of the grace it receives.

3. But this bread was an image of better things to come. (John 6: 48—58.) 1. It was from heaven 2. It came to the needy; 3. To the unworthy; 4. In great abundance; 5. With agreeable qualities, to suit the taste of every one that was hungry; 6. It was easily obtained by those wishing it; 7. It must be gathered and eaten to preserve life; 8. It must be gathered at the time commanded, or it could not be obtained; 9. The manner in which it was given, was an impressive lesson of obedience: so the faith that receives Christ obeys his commands; 10. It was unlike the gospel food in this—That it did not keep from death always. He that eateth this shall never die. Unlike in the extent of the *participation*. They all partook. Now many refuse the Gospel and die.

## LECTURE VIII.

### ROCK AT REPHIDIM.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go: Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."

Exodus 17: 5 6.

"And Moses lift up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly: and the congregation drank, and their beasts also."—NUMBERS 20: 11.

Man is a compound of strange and opposite elements. This is true, both of the constitution of his nature, and of his moral manifestations. By one part of his nature, he bears a near affinity to the earth from which he originated, and to which he is constantly tending. By another part of his nature, he claims alliance with heaven, whence he came, and aspires to the engagements and dignified employments of exalted spirits. Through his material part, he is continually betraying his weakness, dependence, and mortality. Through his spiritual part, he shows evidence of a durable and exalted destiny. These two parts of his nature do not appear to be in harmony. By the one he is drawn to the earth, and led, with the inferior animals, to get his nourishment from the ground; by the other he is led to share the intellectual food of angels. By the one part of his constitution, there is a perpetual effort to rise; by the other to keep him down. The fleshly appetites co-operate with the earthly



nature, to degrade him; reason, and the moral feelings, unite with his spiritual part, to elevate him. Among these jarring elements, religion interposes a third power in aid of man's rational part, and contributes its influence to raise him from the sensual to the rational, from the rational to the spiritual, and from the spiritual to the heavenly. To aid the soul in this high and holy effort to regain its lost dignity, and reach that elevation for which it was destined, all nature is laid under contribution to stimulate us, and give us impressive lessons of instruction, and admonition. Our constantly returning bodily wants, our weakness and dependence, become the hand-maids of the highest wisdom. The recurrence of hunger and thirst, at every brief interval, teaches us our spiritual dependence, and the bountiful supply usually afforded by an indulgent Providence leads us to rely upon the plenitude of grace. The certainty of languor and death, ensuing upon the neglect of partaking of bodily nourishment, teaches the certainty of spiritual decline and death, upon the neglect of that nourishment which is suited to the soul. The care of God for the body, in supplying its wants, even at the expense of miracles, leads us to rely with greater confidence on his care for the soul. If nature must change her established laws, rather than man be hungry or thirsty, may we not expect nature shall change her laws, rather than the soul should perish? If so much is done for man in his sinfulness in time, what may we not expect will be done for him in his perfection in eternity?

I remarked in the previous lecture, that God often laid himself under an obligation to answer a demand, which his own arrangements had created. This

may be a peculiarity in the plans of God. The reason why *we* do not *designedly* embarrass the objects which we wish to accomplish, is a want of confidence in our ability to overcome the difficulty which we might interpose. Moses would not, of his own mind, have led the people to resting places where there was no food nor drink; because he was sensible he could not overcome the difficulty. But obstacles insurmountable by man, are nothing in the way of God; and it is in coming forth for the removal of difficulties, which to us is immovable, that he convinces, and impresses us with a sense of his being and perfections. In the every day observance of a uniform Providence, we cease to observe the omnipotent power by which it is managed. In taking perpetually of the exhaustless store, we forget the hand which keeps it filled, and in drinking, so often as want returns, of the perennial stream of good, we cease to remember that it has its source in Divine benevolence. To remind us of these truths, so necessary to be felt, to teach us our dependence, and to regulate our gratitude, we are made to feel the pressure of want, and that when God comes to our help, the interposition may be seen and acknowledged. It is when the power and skill of Moses are at an end, that you hear of him going to God for direction and help. And it is for deliverance wrought, when human ability was exhausted, which tuned his harp most sweetly, saying, "The Lord's portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land in a waste, howling wilderness, he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye, as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh

them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the field, and he made him to suck honey out the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." It was not oil, nor honey; but because it was seasonable, and they felt their need it was refreshing as oil, and sweet as honey. To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet, how much more that which is sweet in itself. But the full soul loatheth the honeycomb. So to the soul that feels its spiritual wants, and hungers, and thirsts for righteousness, the consolations of the Gospel are as cold water to one perishing with thirst. To such, the words of God are more precious than gold, sweeter than honey, even the honeycomb.

This aspect of the economy of Providence, by which God causes, or permits, insurmountable obstacles to intervene, is seen in that mournful catastrophe by which our race sinned, and became alienated from the favor of God, and in that wonderful provision of mercy by which they may be restored. That God could have prevented this disastrous event, does not seem readily to admit of doubt. It has indeed been said, that the first sin could not have been prevented, without infringing upon man's free agency. But will it be said that God never prevents any moral agent from sin, or that if he does, he destroys his free agency? If so, free agency is only another name for independence, in the highest sense, even of God. And in this way conferring free agency, would be giving a divine attribute to the creature. To us, at least, it appears more easy to have prevented the introduction of

sin, than to counteract its influence, and remove its effects. If the first was a difficulty which could not be prevented, the last looks more like one that could not be removed. But God, in the economy of grace, has undertaken to remove its effects from all the candidates for glory; and the fact that he has undertaken it, gives strong presumption that it will be accomplished. But though God did not cause this derangement of his moral creation, as he caused the tribes of Israel to go into a barren and parched desert, he suffered it to occur by a perverted use of man's moral agency. Though he did not lead to it, as by the cloudy pillar to Horeb, he foresaw its existence, with all its dire effects upon his fair creation, and in his counsels before time, made provision for a scheme of boundless wisdom, and wonderful adaptations, to meet the case. Though he might, for all that appears in the nature of the case, have controlled the circumstances, and the wicked agent employed about the first sin, so that a happy, and holy race, might have passed their blessed probation here, and been taken then to a yet more happy world. As he could have led the host of Israel the direct way to Canaan, without the depths of the Red Sea, and the famine of the desert; yet, where then would have been the display of the wisdom of God before principalities and powers, in heavenly places? How would have been seen so impressively the length and breadth of that love of God, which passeth knowledge? When the developments, and controlling influences of that wonderful economy of redemption, with which the entire history of the world is connected? Where the anthems of praise, and the golden harps attuned to redeeming love in



the upper temple, unto him that washed us in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, to live and reign with him forever? Had this been the case, we might have been met to praise our God for preserving grace, but not for redeeming grace. Which would have been best for us, in the whole range of our unending existence, is not for us to examine; but to praise our redeeming God, that seeing we are in a wilderness, with famine and death before us, we are called to approach the smitten rock, and drink its exhilarating streams, to refresh us on our way to the better country.

To assist our meditations, and animate our feelings, on a theme so interesting, we may be aided by a review of the scene at Rephidim, and Kadesh Meribah.

The rock itself will lead you to the person of the Redeemer.

The rock smitten, to the Savior in his sufferings.

The rock emitting a refreshing and plentiful stream, to the effects of his wonderful death.

1. That we are led by a proper way to a proper object of contemplation, when we are conducted by this wonderful rock, to the more wonderful person of the Mediator, is inferred, in part, from the light Isaiah throws on our way, when he says, "a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And the apostle of the Gentiles conducts us, with certain steps, from the rock in Horeb, to the Man of Calvary, when he says, referring to this event, "they did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock *was Christ*. It was

so, not really, but typically. It was spiritual, not by substance, but by signification; not by its quality, but by its use. As an emblem of the Savior's person, it refers us to the *strength, solidity, durability, support, shelter* and *shade*, in him who is everlasting strength, to whom we may fly as a refuge, and on whom we may build as a foundation. No metaphor in the Bible, perhaps, is more frequent than this, illustrating the character and offices of the Redeemer. Though it is never used before this remarkable occurrence, it is soon after adopted by Moses in his dying song: "God is a rock; his way is perfect." With the same view the apostle says, "Other *foundation* can no man lay." And again it is contained in the Scripture: "I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." In the constitution of his wonderful person, there is every thing to give security and firmness. For "the child born, the Son given," is no other than the "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant. The word, which was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and his glory was seen as of the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But it is not Divinity in the abstract, which is the foundation of a sinner's hope. As it is expressed in verse:

"Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find;  
The holy, just, and sacred three  
Are terrors to my mind."

It is not the rock merely, but the rock *smitten*, that affords refreshment. It is only when we

esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, that the refreshing water of life flows into our souls; only when we view him "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," that we are healed by his stripes. It is after it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied. It is because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors, that a portion with the great is divided to him, and he divides the spoils with the strong. It was by being made perfect through suffering, he became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. The rock was smitten with the rod of Moses, the type of the law; so Christ was made under the law. It was by being made a curse for us, he redeemed us from the curse of the law. It was this subjection to the law, and substitution in the sinner's room, which was the bitter source of all his sorrows; which led him to say, See all ye that pass by, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow; which led him as a culprit to Pilate's bar—to the sufferings of the garden—to the hill of Calvary—to the excruciating sufferings of the ignominious cross—to mourn the hidings of his Father's countenance—to say it is finished. The rock was smitten in the presence of the elders of Israel, and amidst the tumults of the people. Christ suffered before the rulers of the nation, amidst the contemptuous cries of the multitude, in the most public place, and on the most public occasion. The rock was smitten by God's command; so it pleased the Lord to bruise him. Awake, O sword, against my fellow; smite the shepherd.

3. The issuing stream refers to the effects of his sufferings. 1. To his blood, which he says, is drink indeed, and pardon through it, the knowledge of which, to a guilty conscience, is as cold water to a thirsty soul. 2. The influences of the Spirit. These two great classes of thought were symbolized by the water and blood, which came from the Savior's pierced side. This fulfilled the *promise*. "I will pour water," &c. (Is. 44: 3.) It *answers* the *invitation*. "If any man thirst," &c. (Jno. 7: 37—39; Is. 55: 1.) "And the Spirit and the bride say Come." (Rev. 22: 17.) 3. The stream secured their future supply. So the promised comforter was to abide. (Jno. 14: 16.) These are the streams David saw, (Ps. 46: 4,) and John saw afterwards, (Rev. 22: 1,) and which the Savior commends, (Jno. 4: 14.) 4. Their partaking may show you the office, and necessity of your faith: may urge all to partake now. There is a boundless territory before you, without a drop to cool your tongue.



## LECTURE IX.

### MT. SINAI, WHEN THE LAW WAS GIVEN.

“And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof descended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.”—Exodus 19: 16—21.

Every creature has what is termed the law of its being. According to this it acts, and conformity to this gives it its peculiar character. It is this which enables us to classify different things into their proper kinds, or species. Every thing is regraded as answering the end of its existence, when it conforms to the law of its being. In material nature, in both that which is organized with life, and that which is without, there appears to be a perfect conformity to the law of its being. The great masses of unconscious matter, which roll in immensity, obey exactly their prescribed rules, and when they depart from their long traveled path, it is in obedience to a new order, which they perfectly obey till it is countermanded. Vegetable and animal nature shew the same evidence of

docility. It is in intelligent nature only that we see a departure from this rule. It is in that class of creation only, which is capable of knowing, that we find the exception. It is where we would have the most reason to expect complete conformity, that we find the least [evidence of it. It is in that portion of creation where a want of conformity would be the most disastrous, that we discover the most proof of a want of it. It is with angels, the master-piece of creation in heaven, and with man, the most finished piece of God's workmanship on earth, that departures from the law of well organized existence are most apparent. This may appear strange under the government of an Omnipotent ruler, that the best part of his workmanship should give the most evidence of defect; but if this be the *fact* in the case, it is more becoming in us to know, and admit it, than to speculate about the cause of it. And if we have any agency in producing, or continuing such a state of things, to humble ourselves in view of it, and to set ourselves to rectify it. Whatever may be the cause of our want of conformity to the law of our being, it might be presumed that the cause of our present irregularity was not, that there was no law given us at first. It might be presumed, that when there was law given to every thing else, from the greatest to the smallest, that man, who was at the head of all, should have a law; and that as every thing beside had a law suitable to its nature, and to the office which it was to perform, that man also would have a law suitable to his nature and duties. And for the proof of this, we are not left to the information only which revelation brings us. We find the evidence of it by attending to

ourselves. We find that when we violate the laws of our physical constitution, it is followed by derangement and suffering. Intemperance produces disease; profligacy leads to wretchedness. Violating the law of our moral constitution produces distress, fear, and self-condemnation; conformity to it secures approbation and complacency. A course of conduct which is called right, meets with approval from our own minds, and the favorable judgment of others; while the contrary procures the condemnation of both. Why this, if there is not a law stamped on our moral nature? If not, what is wrong would be as approvable as what is right. That there is such a law intimately connected with our very being, and not dependent on a written revelation of it, is proved by the fact, that it is *universal*; that it belongs to the portions of the race that are without the written law, alike with those who have it. The fact that approval, or disapproval, does not always relate to the same things, does not prove that there is no law, but only that the law does not operate in the same direction. The fact that a body is not drawn to another having less attractive power, does not prove that the law of gravitation does not belong to it; but, that it is drawn at all, proves that gravitation can be predicated of it. The fact that conscience, in certain circumstances, approves of what is wrong, does not prove there is no conscience, but only the strength of the wrong influence by which it is swayed. There is then a law, not only of our physical being, in common with all other material and organized existence, but also a law of our moral being. A conscience to decide upon our moral conduct, and give pleasure or pain, as we obey its

dictates or not, is as natural to us, as that faculty of our minds by which we derive pleasurable or painful emotions, from the beautiful, or deformed objects of nature, or art. That it does not decide right, does not prove the want of the faculty, but the want of correct information. That it decides at all upon the morality of an action, is sufficient to prove its existence. Not right action, but action at all, is sufficient proof of the existence of any thing. A moral sense is necessary to make man a moral and accountable being, and the means of knowing his duty, and is necessary to make him guilty for not doing it. Man has always been accountable, therefore, he has always had a moral sense, and knowledge enough of his duty, to make him criminal in the neglect of it. But in his natural and deranged condition, he has never been disposed to conform to the law of his moral nature. What of his duty he has known, he has been disposed to forget. His passions and inclinations, have been at war with his moral judgment. Though conscience has never abdicated the seat of judgment, or resigned her prerogative of pronouncing sentence upon the violator of her commands; yet, in the mutiny and anarchy of the passions, she is often, for a time, under arrest, and amid the clamor of the passions for indulgence, her voice is not heard; yet, at some time, she will speak so as to be heard, and make the offender tremble. It was not to make men moral beings, that this magnificent display was made at Sinai. They were so at their creation. It was not to give them a conscience, but to excite it to action; that, being sustained by the authority of God, more clearly revealed, she might be emboldened



to condemn the offender; that man's moral relations being more clearly seen, she might more easily arrive at certain conclusions. The dispensation of Sinai was to revive, and impress anew, the law of nature, which was almost obliterated by an erring race. It was an effort to bring man back to the original law of his being. The ordinances of heaven and earth, as given to unintelligent matter, had stood firm to their original order. Man only needed reclaiming. For this purpose Sinai is selected; and Israel at its foot, and Moses on its summit, are the medium of communicating the newly promulgated law to the world. The sublimity of the scene, answered to the greatness of the object, and the preparation required of the people to both. When God is the speaker, who would not hear? When he utters his voice, who would not be afraid? But man, in his depravity, easily learns to overlook, and disregard the ordinary means by which God manifests his justice, and his grace. The character of God might be known, by tracing him in the ordinary pathway of his providence. Our relation to him, and our duty, might be inferred by teachable minds, from the every-day lessons which are given us. But familiarity begets indifference, and we cease to recognize the presence of that omnipotent energy which is continually operating in and around us. Even the highest displays of his grace cease to effect us, when they are often repeated. Such is the strange influence of depravity upon the race, that the most effectual way to shut out God from our acknowledgments, is for him to pursue towards us the even tenor of his goodness. And to arrest attention, and break up the listlessness of such beings, some extraordi-

nary, or miraculous display must be made. A war of the elements must take place, nature must give signs of convulsions, before man will be aroused to believe that God is there. The last fifty days of Israel's history were replete with the interpositions of God. The wonders of the Red Sea, the waters of Marah, the miraculous diffusion of bread from heaven, and the plentiful flow of water from the rock, had all been crowded into this short period. The continual presence of God with them, was indicated by the wonderful pillar of cloud, and fire, which led their way; but with this they had already grown too familiar, to be awed into reverence by it. Now there must be a heaping together of the objects of terror and majesty, before the people will tremble at the presence of Jehovah. Now, at length the appointed day arrives in all its importance. Every creature, every element feels and gives witness to the appearance of its God. Heaven and earth, angels and men, air and fire, announce the presence of their great Creator, and Ruler. The hoarse thunder is lost in the louder sound of the trumpet, and that awful sound in its turn, sinks into silence before the all commanding accents of the voice of God himself. The thick darkness of a cloud, impregnated with the terrors of divine justice, at one moment threatens forever to extinguish hope and joy, and that darkness the next moment is dispelled by the more terrible flashes of celestial fire. Compared with this, how poor the pomp, and highest display of earthly princes? Every object of sublimity, and astonishment, enters into this description,—Thunder, lightning, blackness of darkness, tempest, earthquake, the trumpet of God: and all these are but the glim-

merings of majesty. God is in the thunder, the tempest, and the earthquake. It was then he came with ten thousand of his saints. He "maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire." It was then that the chariots of God were "twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place." It was then "the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousand of his saints: from his right hand went a fiery law." "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light." The mountains saw him and trembled.

The greatness of the object, justified the magnificence of the preparation, and the grandeur of the scene. It was to give law to a nation, and through it to a world. The terrific aspect of the circumstances, causing every beholder to tremble, and even Moses himself to "exceedingly fear and quake," was an emblem only of the more terrible justice of God, against those who refuse obedience to the law which was then uttered.

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#### REMARKS.

In the midst of this terrific display of majesty, we discover not obscure glimpses of the Divine benevolence.

1. In giving a law at all to Israel, and through them to the world. The posterity of Abraham is now become a great nation. But what are numbers without government? and government is not a blessing without law. Happiness does not consist in possessions; but in being fitted to enjoy them.

Israel has been delivered from bondage. They are on their way to possess the territory assigned them; but what would this avail them, without law and government? God, then, provides for all things. And what would the world be, with all its possessions of beauty and riches, without moral law to govern its inhabitants? It is bad enough as it is; without it, it would be intolerable. Complete conformity to it, would make this world a paradise; entire disregard of it, would make it a hell: as it is, with a mixed obedience, it is merely tolerable. How wicked, and how much an enemy, both to God and man, is he who dislikes the restraints of the law, and seeks opportunities to violate it.

2. The goodness and mercy of God, are seen in this, that when he came to republish the law to an alienated world, he did not come in terrible majesty to execute it. Legislators do not pursue this course with their revolted subjects. When they have lost the knowledge of the law, by their own indifference, they do not stay the execution of justice for a second trial. His ways are always above our ways.

3. We have reason for gratitude, that we are not placed, exclusively, under a dispensation symbolized by thunder, and darkness, and earthquake. That "ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," &c.



4. The distance at which the people stood, and the terrible symbols accompanying its delivery, teach us that our acceptance with God is not through the medium of law. Its holy strictness, and inflexible justice, forever exclude sinners from hope on the ground of our obedience. But by the aid of the Gospel, we see Sinai's fiery summit encircled by the rainbow of the covenant, and hear a voice louder than the thunderings, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."

Finally, if such were the appearances in the giving of the law, what will they be in the execution of it upon incorrigible offenders. Not Sinai only, but the earth, and heavens, shall be shaken. Darkness shall not cover a solitary mountain only, but the son himself. The Son of God shall descend with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God.

## LECTURE X.

### MOSES WITHOUT FOOD FORTY DAYS.

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and a cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord, was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.—Exodus 24: 15—18.

One criterion of the genuineness of a miracle is, that it has not been performed on a trivial occasion, or for an unimportant object. It would be difficult to believe, that God would counteract the established order of nature, without some object in view, worthy of such interposition. If there had been no other object in view, than merely to distinguish the one nation of the Jews, by peculiar national favors, however important that was to them, as a nation, it would seem hardly sufficient to justify that series of miracles, by which, the settlement of the nation was distinguished.

We look, then, for a higher object, and a wider scope of design, in these wonderful transactions, than merely to bless one people. This design was to benefit the world. While the tribes of Israel were, in the sovereign pleasure of God, made the first receivers of the blessings, they were designed to be the channel of the communication of it, to all succeeding ages, and to every nation. For this purpose, it was not without design, that Palestine was selected as their permanent abode; situated as

it was, in the centre of Asia, it was aptly suited to exert an influence upon the inhabited world. And as an historical fact, it is true, that from this central point, the light of heavenly truth emanated to surrounding nations, like the heat and light of the sun, in the centre of the material system; so that, perhaps, there is no nation on earth, which has not felt something of the beneficial influence. Not only from the nature of the case, must the religion of the Jews have been extensively reported among the surrounding nations, while they quietly abode in Canaan, but when they were taken captive into the great empire of Persia, they made the name of their God to be revered in a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. And it is also a remarkable fact, that the Messiah came of this people, whose appearance was as the breaking forth of a new luminary upon a dark world; and that it was the descendants also of those who trembled at the foot of Sinai, in view of the terrible aspects of majesty, in which God miraculously invested himself, that were the apostles of the New Dispensation, so that it was through Israel, that both the law and the Gospel were published to the world, and it was upon the proof afforded by the miraculous evidence, which accompanied these manifestations of God to Israel, that the authenticity of the whole of the communication from God to man, is dependent. If it could be clearly shewn, that God never spake by Moses, it would be difficult to prove that he ever spake by Christ, or his apostles. The object to be promoted by these displays of Omnipotence, was so general and so grand, as fully to justify the means which were employed, to prove that God, himself, was the author of the communications which were made.

In the last lecture, having considered the general object of that display of majesty, by which the moral law was promulgated, and the particular purpose for which, in so august a manner, it was given, we are here called to attend Moses a second time, to the flaming summit of this auspicious mountain, and witness his wonderful life in the cloud, another forty days without food, and to wait in silent expectation, for the communication which he will make on his return from so intimate a fellowship with God. After six days' display of majesty, which was calculated to inspire every beholder with reverence—the glory of the Lord on the top of the Mount, being in the sight of all the people, like devouring fire. Moses, at the call of God, went into the midst of the cloud, and there abode forty days and nights. Here, not by audible communication, as the ten commandments were delivered, but in private conference with Moses, to be by him delivered to the people, God delivered those institutions of a civil, political, and ecclesiastical nature, which regarded their social and national capacity, which, if properly studied and understood, will be found to contain the most just and comprehensive views of human nature; the most noble and liberal ideas of legislation; the most perfect equality; the profoundest sagacity; and the most unbounded kindness and benevolence.

The laws delivered to Moses, and by him to the people, have usually been distinguished into three classes: the Moral, embracing the ten commandments; the Levitical, or Ceremonial, and the Judicial. The Moral, teaches us the relation we sustain to God, as Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge; and the general duties mankind owe to one another. A correct view of this law, and of themselves, would soon teach



mankind that they are sinners, and cause them to tremble in view of its sanction; because they must be sensible they fail to render that obedience which it requires. Thus, in kindness to man, in his sinful and spiritually helpless condition, in connection with the announcement of the moral law, the Levitical was also made known. This embraced the Gospel, or taught the way in which those who violated the moral law, could be forgiven, and accepted. The tabernacle, with all its sacrifices and bloody offerings, was the New Testament Revelation in symbol and figure. The judicial law was the moral law detailed, so far as it had respect to relative duty, or it was the civil law of the nation. The moral law was for the world, in every age. The Levitical law was for the world till the Messiah came, and its spirit and import for the world to the end of time. The judicial law, except in the peculiarities by which it was adapted exclusively to the Jewish people, is a pattern for the imitation of other nations. Before the nation was settled in its inheritance, all these laws were to be given, in order that their national existence, might be a blessing to them. In order that they might be fitted for self-government, they were kept forty years in the wilderness, under a process of rigid tuition and discipline, before they were permitted to take possession of their national inheritance. It is not every community which desires the privilege that is fitted for self-government, or to whom their independence would prove a blessing. After Israel obtained his freedom from the bondage of Egypt, the whole adult generation had to be detained in the passage from the one kind of government to the other, and a new generation raised up under a particular kind of training, before they

were fitted to make the new government a blessing. It is not even wise and wholesome civil institutions alone, which will make a nation prosperous and happy; but these, in connection with virtue and integrity in the rulers, and in the mass of the people. Hence, when God himself undertakes to make a prosperous nation, and distinguish it above all the nations of the earth, he first gives it the moral law, to make it moral; he then gives it the Levitical law, to make it pious; he gives it political and ecclesiastical law, that its moral and pious principles may be wisely guided, in the distribution of equal rights, and be taught the science of self-government.

That God, by Moses, did unfold the elements of a system of church and state government, for the nation of the Jews, will be disputed, perhaps, by few, and if so, it might be expected to bear the marks of the infinite wisdom of its author, and have claims to be examined and understood by every nation, and men of every age. The fact, that God thought proper to make known the general principles and particular details of a political and ecclesiastical constitution for the nation, which he designed especially to bless, is at least presumptive evidence, that they were not qualified, of themselves, to frame such an one. And what was true of them in this respect, is doubtless true of all other nations. There is no good reason to suppose, that the Jews were distinguished for mental weakness, or want of civilization, above others, so as to make it necessary that a plan of government should be revealed to them, rather than to others. If it be the fact, that a plan of government was presented to the Jews, it is satisfactory evidence, that all men needed it; for, whatever was revealed to them, was not only de-

signed for their benefit, but for the good of all; and it is not to be supposed, that God would make a particular revelation of that which we could sufficiently understand without it. We doubt not, that a revelation of the general principles of government was as necessary to man, in his state of depravity, in order that he might obtain the highest blessings of a citizen of the community, as the revelation of the plan of salvation, to his obtaining a competent knowledge of the way to be saved. We can spend our existence in the present world, without the knowledge of either the one or the other. But, for accomplishing the high end of our being in this world, both are necessary. When God would particularly bless the nation of Israel, and through them, the world, he made known how to live, both in an individual and social capacity, in the state, and church, and also how to be saved. He taught man how to be a citizen on earth, that he might be a citizen in heaven. And a proof of the fact, that mankind are dependent on revelation for the knowledge of good government, both in church and state, is the truth, that no nation, in the history of the world, has established a government of just and equitable rights, where the influence of revelation, has not been felt. To the conclusive proof of the same, is the fact, that just in proportion to the extent of the influence of revelation, and the incorporation of its principles with church and state constitutions,—carried out in the details of law—just in that proportion, it is found that communities are prosperous and happy. It might be an interesting inquiry, to ascertain what that particular form of government was, which Jehovah himself instituted. It may not be easy for us to know this in all its details, but its

general form we can understand. The Hebrew nation, under the constitution which God gave it, was a Republic, governed by representatives of its own election. The twelve tribes were, in some respects, so many independent sovereignties, while, for other purposes, they formed into a consolidated government. Of these confederated states, there was a chief magistrate, or President; the first of which was Moses, who was succeeded by Joshua. The constitution and laws, were at first proposed by God, through Moses, to the elders, or representatives of the people, and were adopted by them, when they said with one voice, all the words which the Lord hath said, will we do. This adoption of their constitution, was repeated at the death of Moses, and by a statute ever afterwards, it was to be ratified by a national convention, every seven years. The election of their rulers, was upon republican principles. Moses issues to them a proclamation: Take ye wise men, and men of understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. That is, the people were to elect, and Moses to invest them with office. The power of their civil rulers was very limited. Office was not hereditary. Moses had not even a relative to succeed him.

They had lower, and higher courts of appeal. For teaching religion, the education of the youth of the nation, and the expounding of the law, the tribe of Levi was devoted. When, through their pride, they would have a king, he was not a monarch in the modern sense. Saul, the first king, was chosen by acclamation; and even David, in the height of his power, felt that the popular influence of the government was beyond his control, when he expressed this feeling: "Ye sons of Zeruiah, ye are too



strong for me." The government of the church was of the same general nature. In that economy, they were not distinct, but mixed. The government was administered by those who were chosen for the purpose, called in civil phrase, senators, from their supposed age and wisdom; in the church, called Presbyters, or elders, for the same reason; whence comes the name 'Presbyterian.' The forms of government most favored by the divine pattern, then, we conclude, are governments by election and representation, both in church and state. The extremes, opposite to this, and towards which man, in his folly, is always tending, are on the one hand, the concentration of power in one or a few hands, or, on the other, the exercise of it by the mass of the people. And to accomplish one or the other of these unworthy objects, the history of the world, has been a history of misery and blood.

We may infer the following principles: 1. That government is a divine institution, (Rom. 13: 1.) 2. That God is the supreme law-giver. 3. That they who rule under him, should be men fearing God, (Ex. 18: 21; 2 Sam. 23: 4.) 4. That no form of government will preserve the church, or state, without religious principle. Though Israel had a form of government given them by heaven, it could not preserve them, when they became irreligious; and for violating their constitution in this respect, they have been disorganized, and scattered among the nations these twenty-five hundred years. 5. That we are indebted to the Bible, for whatever distinguishes us in political or church privileges, and their continuance depends upon the manner in which we respect the authority of God. 6. That the separation of religious principle from the ad-

ministration of government, is a certain forerunner of national misery and destruction. Moses, while receiving the law for the world, was happy forty days without food. But God will never work a miracle to make an individual or a nation prosperous and happy, while living in the allowed violation of those laws.

## LECTURE XI.

### THE FINISHED TABERNACLE OVERSHADOWED BY THE CLOUDY PILLAR.

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journey."—Exodus 40: 34—38.

The manifestations of God to men, are not merely to inspire them with awe of his majesty, but to excite them to obedience; not only to produce faith, but to lead to action. It is not sufficient that we tremble before him, but that we obey his will. God displays his infinite perfections in the view of his creatures, not merely to afford them inactive enjoyment, but to induce them to seek their happiness in laborious services, or self-denying duties. Moses was admitted to unprecedented familiarity with Jehovah in the mount for twice forty days; but it was not that he might recline upon friendship so condescendingly vouchsafed to him, and be exempted from future duty, but that he might more fully understand his duty, and be better qualified for its performance. While he was enjoying the heavenly fellowship, God was prescribing the plan of his future labor, and that of the people,

when he should descend again to the plain below, and mingle with men in the ordinary pursuits of life. We have no reason to suppose that exemption from active service will be one of the privileges even of heaven. Even the angels are not idle, but *serving* spirits sent forth to do his will; and the sublime appearances of Sinai were promoted by their presence. "The Lord was among them as in Sinai, in the holy place." The law was ordained by angels, in the hand of a Mediator.

The extraordinary manner in which Moses had intercourse with God on the mount, was not to be the common way in which he, or others were to have access to the object of their worship. But this was granted that a common mode might be fixed and perpetuated, by which not only the chiefs of the people, but all might have access to God; a way which did not forbid their approach, and which, divested of so much awful grandeur and terrible justice, would invite, rather than terrify sinners to approach a God, at whose presence the hills trembled, and mountains smoked. For this purpose, God gave to Moses the form of that worship, which was suited to those who had broken the law, and said to him, "See that thou make all things after the pattern shewn thee in the mount." Moses no sooner descends than he sets himself to the performance of his task. Not the thundering summit of Sinai was to be the emanating center of Divine communications, but the tabernacle in the midst of the surrounding tribes. This was to be reared, not by miraculous agency, but by the united effort of the whole people, for whose benefit it was intended. God works miracles to assure us that he speaks to us, and prescribes our duty, but not to do



it for us. It is not to relieve man from obligation, but to increase it, that extraordinary interpositions are afforded. Human hands are to be employed to erect the holy tent, before the Shekinah will speak from above the cherubim; and as man is not so likely to value what costs him nothing, all are to contribute to its erection. More than acquired skill is wanted for completing the pattern that God has given, and Bezaleel and Aholiab are supernaturally endowed. Gold, silver, and other materials, are wanted for the structure; these are not to be furnished by miracle, but by *liberality*. Every one feels the importance of a medium of intercourse with God, of further light to guide the pathless journey, and of the forgiveness of sin. Labor and beneficence flow from willing hearts and hands, though they had no provision laid up for to-morrow, till the people had to be stayed by a proclamation, that there was enough. What a lesson of benevolence this, to those who have much goods laid up for many years, and are enriching upon their own inheritance, while the cry is issuing from the law and the Gospel, in ten thousand pensive voices, Give us the word of life; help us build a tabernacle in the wilderness, that we may worship our God. When all are willing and engaged, work is soon done. And why should we delay a work, the accomplishment of which insures a blessing? Why should we thus stand in the way of a good that is hastening to meet us? In about six months the sacred tent is finished, according to the inspired plan; and no sooner finished, than the wonderful cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord filled it. "For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the

sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journey."

To see the pattern showed him in the mount exactly copied, and the design of the great Jehovah perfectly fulfilled, must have filled the good man's mind with ineffable delight. And especially, if he looked through this shadow of good things to come, to the very image of the things, to Christ, who, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, by his own blood entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. A joy similar to that which is experienced by every believer between the predictions concerning the Savior of the world, and their accomplishment; between the promises made unto the fathers, and the blessings enjoyed by their children. A prelude to that delight which will be experienced, when the perfect coincidence is discovered between the descriptions of future and heavenly glory, and the things described; between the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel, and the glorious realities of our Father's house above. Some then, as now, may have limited their vision to the material appendages of the workmanship, and have satisfied themselves with the form, without the power of godliness. But God then, as now, meant to lead their devotions farther; and from the outer, to conduct them, through the inner court, to the holiest of all.

God's method of teaching religion was as a wise instructor would teach the children of his school. He adapts the manner to the age and capacity. First, by pictures addressed to the eye, then by the ideas themselves. In the highest progress of the church on earth, she will not be so far advanced,

as not to need any kind of elementary instruction. But some of the emblems are dropped and changed, as she advances. . It is in the celestial city alone, she will not need the sun any more by day, nor the moon by night. While our spirits are encompassed in these gross, material tenements, matter must be made the medium of thought, and intercourse with the spiritual world. It is spirit only, that can commune with spirit, without a medium. Thus, the tabernacle for the time then present, was the *Gospel oracle*. On entering the enclosed space, or court, connected with this sacred tent, the first objects which presented themselves were, on the one hand, the altar of burnt offerings, and on the other, the laver for the priests to wash in.

By this altar, it would seem no stretch of imagination to suppose, that the great atonement, the means of pardon and acceptance with God, were shadowed forth. By the laver was signified the purity which becomes all those who would approach a pure and holy God. In their nearness, and union, they show what acquits the guilty, and fits them for communion with God, being justified freely by his grace, and sanctified by his spirit. An altar without a laver, would encourage the offender to continue in sin, because grace abounds. A laver without an altar, would be to inspire a vain confidence in an external and imperfect righteousness. In their union, they represent man's happiest state—sin forgiven, and his nature renewed. Too often are they separated in men's conceptions of the way to be saved; and holiness has been sought at the altar, where it was not; and forgiveness is sought in the laver, where it is not. The blood does not make holy, and the water does not

forgive sin. These were under the open heaven, seen of all, accessible to all, and by this circumstance, even then teaching the free and accessible nature of that salvation, which should be more fully unfolded under the gospel, both for sin and uncleanness.

Through the court of the tabernacle we are conducted by the golden candlestick, with its seven burning lamps, the emblem of the Sun of righteousness, illuminating the Gospel day, and of the more unclouded radiance of heaven. By its light you perceive the table of shew-bread renewed every Sabbath day, the figure of that table which the wisdom of the eternal Father has prepared with the bread which came down from heaven, to give life to the world, and of our Father's house above, where there is bread enough, and to spare. You see with wonder too, the High Priest of our profession, who has for us entered into the holy place, and by the golden altar, holding the golden censor, to whom much incense is given, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar, which is before the throne. Separated from this, by a vail embroidered with cherubims, was the most holy place, into which the High Priest alone entered once a year. In this sacred chamber of the Deity, were repositied the most sacred symbols of the Divine presence. Here was the ark of the covenant, covered by the mercy seat, and over it the cherubims of glory, between which, Jehovah was said to dwell. Thus leading the view of faith to the great High Priest, who by his own blood hath entered into the holiest of all, and animating the hope which we have as an anchor of the soul, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither



the forerunner has for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Such were some of the holy uses of that structure which God so particularly described, and which Moses, and the people, so faithfully and cheerfully erected. It was a medium of approach to a holy God by sinful men. When it was finished, Jehovah gave evidence of his approbation, and of his presence to guide and bless those who approached him by this medium, by the hovering over it of that miraculous cloud, which had so strangely conducted them from the land of Egypt.

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REMARKS:

This cloud may be regarded as a complication of miracles. That its form was never changed. Nothing is more variable than the appearance of ordinary clouds. That it should always maintain its station over the tabernacle. Other clouds are carried about by the tempest. That it should be preserved forty years. That it should move in such a peculiar direction. That contrary to the nature of all other clouds, it should be brighter by night than by day.

Its uses may teach us what God is to those who wait upon him, through the medium of the true tabernacle.

1. It was their guide in the pathless desert.

2. It was their guard that protected them. When their way was in the sea, and their path in the great waters, and their footsteps were not known, it led them like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

3. It was as a splendid lamp hung over their

encampment to supply the absence of the sun. An emblem of what the word of God is, a lamp to our feet, and a light to our way; and of what Jesus Christ is, as the Sun of righteousness to the spiritual world.

4. It was as a magnificent umbrella, to shade them in that torrid wilderness. Showing what Christ is to his people, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; and by whom the promise is fulfilled, The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

5. It was their oracle. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar. The cloud and tabernacle rested and moved together; shewing that if God will be such to us, it will be only by the medium and means of his appointment. If you expect God to be your guide, protector, defence, and instructor, you can realize him to be such, only when you approach him by the altar of sacrifice, and the purifying laver; and rely upon the intercession of the High Priest in the *Holy of Holies*. Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places. Who would not trust in thee, O thou most mighty? Who would not fear thee, thou king of saints? Trust ye in the Lord, forever trust."

## LECTURE XII.

### DESTRUCTION OF KORAH, AND THE SETTLEMENT OF THE MUTINY ABOUT THE CIVIL POWER.

“And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.”—NUMBERS 16: 31—34.

Every thing in nature and providence, is under government. The world of unconscious matter constantly feels the impress of a controlling influence, guiding its movements, and fixing its destiny. The most insignificant particle, in the most distant part of the universe, cannot claim for itself independence. From the atom that flies in the sun-beam, to the sun himself, the moving centre of surrounding worlds, there is presented a system of universal influences, of superior and subordinate agencies, directing and subserving each other. What is true in the world of matter, is true also in the world of mind. From God the center and emanating fountain of intelligence, to the lowest and feeblest manifestation of mind, there are many grades of influence, and varieties of operative agency; but all are under government. With angels, a general name for a higher order of intelligence between God and man, is still associated the idea of government. There are principalities

and powers in the heavenly places. There are angels, and archangels. However high the station, or elevated the office, the highest is controlled by a higher, till you reach the Supreme controlling power of the universe. And independence is inscribed no where, but on the throne of God. In the great first cause, and creative energy *alone*, it exists underived, and unassailable. He only can say, I am, and beside me there is no God. He was before all things, and by him all things consist. He only would be the same, did all things else cease to be. This universal system of government not only necessarily exists among created things, from the fact, itself, that they are created, but is necessary also, for answering the high end of their being. Without it, confusion would be universal, and the wreck of nature the result. It is not only necessary to the *existence* of dependent beings, but to the happiness of all intelligent creatures. But necessary and connected with their happiness as it is, human nature does not instinctively submit to the powers that are over it. Even holy minds have not always manifested a becoming disposition in this respect. It seems to be intimated that this was the fault of the angels who kept not their first station, but aspired to a higher. And it is more than intimated, that this was the fault of the happy progenitors of our race. Dissatisfied with the control under which they were placed, and aspiring to be as gods, they lost that measure of independence which they had, and placed the race in a condition to be associated with the rebellious spirits of a higher order, in a state of abridged privileges, reserved in chains of darkness unto judgment.



To refuse the influence of wholesome law, is natural to man. He gives evidence of this disposition among the earliest manifestations of his childhood. So strong is this propensity, that persuasion is often insufficient to lead to a proper acquiescence, and it can be produced only by compulsion. So strong is this natural propensity of our nature, in its depravity, that it not only often tramples on the authority of human superiors, but dares to brave the authority even of God; and with presumptuous audacity asks, "Who is the Lord, that we should fear him, or the Almighty, that we should serve him." To reduce to obedience such unyielding spirits, is the great object of the wonderful mediation of the son of God, and the agency of the Eternal Spirit. And the authority of the lawgiver to this revolted world, is concentrated in the command, "Submit yourselves unto God." God is now in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. The grand effect produced on the subjects of this gracious influence, is to make them obedient to the government of God.

We have already noticed, that besides defining the duties arising out of the moral relations which man sustains to his Creator, a grand object of the dispensation of Sinai was to reveal a model of State and Church government for the world. But forming the Constitution is one thing, and carrying out its details, into practical execution, is different, and often more difficult. The best minds are supposed to be consulted in originating the laws for the government; but in their operation, every variety of the uninformed mass is effected; and interest, and passion, and prejudice, have to be encountered. Moses, and the chiefs of the people,

received with reverence the laws which God suggested, and cheerfully promised obedience. But who can give a pledge for the continued compliance of a million of fickle minds, agitated by a few discontented and factious leaders. It was not enough to give them the form of government and laws, but it was also necessary to teach them obedience to them. Not only to give them officers, but to teach them to respect their authority. Miracles were not only necessary to authenticate the Divine authority of the law, but also to enforce obedience. The discipline which was required for this, was more severe than was needed to convince them that God spake to them by Moses. In the first case the mount quaked, and gave signs of convulsions on its summit, and they trembled at its base. In this, the earth opens beneath the feet of the offenders, and they sink into it. So difficult is it to induce men to believe when God speaks, or respect men when they rule by the authority of God; so difficult to make men fear the authority either of God or man. It is very common to be dissatisfied with the station in which God has placed us, and to envy others, who, in our view, occupy more favorable circumstances. God, however, has called mankind to fill different stations in life. One is called of God to rule in church, or state, and another is as much called to fill a private place in society. One is as much called to submit, as the other is to govern. One is called to agriculture, or to a mechanical pursuit, as really as another is to preach the Gospel; and they are qualified by Providence for their respective employments. Moses is called to legislate, and conduct the tribes, under law, to their happy settlement in the land of

promise; Korah to obey the laws when they are made, and to serve as a son of Levi, at the altar, or in the schools of the young. But ambition is ever restless. It thinks there is nothing gained, while any thing remains to be possessed; that it has made no advances toward eminence, while any one stands higher upon the platform; that it attracts no notice, while more eyes are directed to another. To gain its wished for ascendancy, a rival must be displaced, even at his sacrifice. It depreciates superior worth; it detracts from estimable character; it looks at virtuous and praiseworthy action, through the glass of jealousy. It magnifies its own worth, and proclaims its qualifications. It holds out false promises, and says, "O, that I were made ruler in the land;" and with Korah, gathers around it a party, it may be of the lowest of the people, or it may be of the chief men, against existing order, the carrying into effect righteous rule, or against those by whom it is exercised, until the faction is ripe for its deeds of division, or death, unless God, by his particular providence, interposes to disconcert the counsel of Ahithophel, creates a new thing in the earth, and marks the proceeding with the severity of his hot displeasure. And as here the sullen earth becomes obedient to a mandate of him whom the chiefs of the mutineers did not respect, and opened her mouth and swallowed them. Such indeed, sooner or later, will be the fate of all those who resist God's authority, properly administered. For they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

The mistake of Korah, and his associate conspirators, appears to have been, that they did not consider that God had any thing to do in the

appointment of Moses and Aaron to the responsible offices which they held, and that themselves, or others had as good a right to exercise them as they. Hence their language, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy." How much of the same overlooking of the providence of God in the ordination of government, and the designation of particular persons to administer it, now characterizes the population of our country, both in church and state? If the legislation, or execution of law, does not suit the views or prejudices of some, resort is had at once to efforts to depreciate the character of those in authority, from the unworthy motive, as it would seem, that by taking away from the worth of character of those in power, they may, in the same degree, bring into disrepute their official acts. Thus it is, that to speak evil of dignitaries has become almost our mother tongue. An office, however venerable by age, or worthily sustained, falling under the frown of a disaffected party, becomes the play thing of the grocery, and the cant of the school-boy.

For the reason too, that the authority of God is not recognized in government, it is that the noble engine of the *Press* is so often made as a great winding aqueduct, to convey to every remote hamlet, the malignant poison of personal illwill, and often of slanderous misrepresentation of personal character.

If we regarded the officers in church or state, as God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing, according to heaven's designation of them; if we would give honor to whom honor is due, and fear to whom fear, we would never fall



into these sins and abuses. If it be said that men sustaining office are often unworthy of respect, admitting the truth of this, I reply, that in an elective government, they are such as the people make them. And if they do not magnify their office, it is generally because they were unfit for the station before they obtained it, therefore, they are not to blame for a breach of trust, if they carry out the same character afterwards, which they had before. But at least, an office which God has appointed should not be cast into contempt on account of the unworthiness of its incumbent. An individual being very anxious for a place of distinction, and magnifying the justness of his claims, gives no very good evidences of his fitness. Moses was very reluctant to undertake the service to which God called him, and it was after he could excuse himself no more, that he accepted the appointment. Korah seems ready of his own mind to undertake the difficult service. God prospers the one, and confounds the other. It is very natural for man to desire the high places of power and influence; but a mind rightly exercised will consider, that responsibility increases with the influence; and as mankind are, elevation too often only makes the successful aspirant a more open mark for the shafts of envy and illwill. But business undertaken from a sense of duty, and conducted with a conscience void of offence, will be supports to fortitude amidst the opposing influences with which we may have to contend. If Moses had consulted his personal happiness alone, perhaps he would have remained in his shepherd's life, upon the mountains of Midia, and waved the crook, instead of the rod of God.

What is there more intolerable to human feelings,

and more trying to pious patience, than to be continually blamed by those to whose good we are devoted, and for whose happiness we labor. This was the reward Moses had from an ungrateful people, and the same that many a faithful servant of God has had since. It is well for such, that the next world is not like this. But God often appears for the vindication of his servants here. Korah, and the two hundred chiefs, sink into the cleaving earth, or are consumed by fire, while Moses and Aaron are established in the authority. But, how difficult it is to silence complainers. This signal punishment from heaven, is made a new ground of quarrel with Moses, and he is blamed with killing the men whom the Lord killed by miracle, and to humble them, fourteen thousand more have to be killed by plague. Nor is this exhibition of human nature peculiar to that people or time. Who are always blamed when, on account of sin, calamity comes upon the church, or state? The leaders *especially*, and they are blamed according to the elevation of their station.

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REMARKS.

1. That God has established an order of the ministry in the church. That it does not belong in common to the whole people. That it is not assumed of one's own mind at pleasure. The sons Eliab aimed at this office without being called, and were buried alive, and their companions consumed by fire from the Lord, and their censers were to be made into plates to cover the altar, to be a sign ever after to others, not to invade an office which God had forbidden.

2. That sin which brings a punishment to others,

should be useful to observers. 1. As a confirmation of our faith. 2. As an excitement to zeal. 3. As a warning to ourselves.

We see in this case, that God regards the order of his law, more than he does the order of all the material universe beside—that he will preserve that order, if nature should fall.

## LECTURE XIII.

### AARON'S ROD WITH BLOSSOMS AND FRUIT.

“And it came to pass, that on the morrow, Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmuring from me, that they die not.”—NUMBERS 16: 8—10.

Enough had been done, as it would seem, to silence the rebellious spirit of the people, and reconcile them to the authority of Moses and Aaron. Korah, and those that were with him, had sunk into the open earth; a miraculous fire had flamed from the altar and consumed the two hundred and fifty chief men that offered incense; fourteen thousand and seven hundred had become the sudden victims of the plague, and were dead among their tents. These events had struck the survivors with awe. But it was seen that there was yet a secret lurking of disaffection, that would show itself when the impression of these calamities was a little removed. Though, as it would seem, they were satisfied that Moses was properly invested with the authority which he claimed; perhaps also, that the tribe of Levi was divinely selected to officiate about the things of the altar; yet they were disposed to inquire, why should Aaron, above all his fellows, have the honor of the high priesthood put upon him, and perpetuated to his first born son, through



successive generations. This, they might think, looked like monopolizing distinctions, and perpetuating offices, without respect to worth, and might be imagined to proceed from the partiality of Moses, to his brother, and his posterity, rather than from the will of God. To settle this arrangement by undoubted evidence, to satisfy the people that it was not the doing of Moses, but of God, and to prevent murmuring and mutiny in future, resort is had to an expedient, which should ever after settle this dispute. This was to be, not a miracle of judgment, but of mercy; addressed not to their fears, but to their judgment. For this purpose, the rod of Moses, at the motion of which, desolation and death had wasted Egypt, and sunk the pride of her military power in the Red Sea; and which, as it would seem, had now passed into the hands of Aaron, was to be the instrument. This staff, which had been employed so often miraculously, to attest the authority of Moses as the lawgiver to Israel, and king in Jeshurun, is now also to be employed to establish the *ecclesiastical* office, as it had been the *civil*. For the trial of right to the sacred office among the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob, the heads of the chief families of the tribes are to deposit their staves in the tabernacle for the night, and the family of him whose rod should vegetate with new life, and bud, and blossom, as under a vernal shower, and bring forth ripe fruit before the coming day, as under an autumn sun, should be preferred as the family whom God designed. The proposal is accepted, each one, no doubt, hoping to succeed. But promotion cometh not by chance; but God, who seteth up one and casteth down another, superintends this trial. And on the following day, when the

rods are brought forth for inspection, they all remained as before, except that of Aaron, which, though it had dried forty years since it was taken from the mountains of Midian, budded, and bloomed, and bore almonds. This was strange enough, that it should vegetate at all, and as strange that it should have all these upon it at once. The works of God are great, and sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. He does nothing for the display of power merely, or to excite the gaze of astonished beholders. While all his works produce these effects on those who examine them, they are intended for other remote and beneficial effects. Especially does he not interpose his miraculous agency above the laws of nature, without an object worthy of such interference. We therefore naturally ask, what was there on this occasion, and in this event, to justify its occurrence? There was, no doubt, more in its import than we can discover, or are able to present. But we think we see it, intimately connected with the four following things, any one of which is of sufficient importance to show the wisdom and goodness of God, in this exercise of power. In general, its object was to establish in the world the authority of the sacred office, as of divine appointment. This was important to the interests of man.

*First, as a member of civil society:*

The wisdom of God is seen in the legislation of Moses; not only in wise enactments of a civil nature, and the settlement of civil offices, as necessary for a prosperous and happy government, but in connecting with this, a perpetual arrangement for the religious instruction of the nation. The necessity of this connection has not always

been regarded by subsequent politicians. In a government partaking so much of the nature of a republic as the Israelitish theocracy did, it is peculiarly important that religious instruction, and christian principle, should pervade all classes of the community. In a government where the will of the sovereign is the law of the land, the subjects may be governed with much less of intelligence and moral principle, than where the controlling influence of the state is in the mass of the people. The character of every government will be molded by the character of those holding the power. If they be without principle, so will it. The effect will always be of the nature of its cause; the stream will not rise higher than the fountain. Government is an effect; it cannot, therefore, be expected to be better in its provisions, or in its administration, than those who frame it, or carry it into execution. Without principle, a government can be administered only by force. But if the forcing power is itself unwilling to act, laws however good, must fail to be executed. In a republic, the compelling power is the people; hence, it is easy to see that a dereliction of principle here, necessarily prostrates at once the best of governments; and practically makes null and void the best laws of the statute book. Instances of this kind daily occur in our own country. Good laws lie inoperative from year to year, because their execution is unpopular. This state of things will always continue to increase with the growing deficiency of correct moral principle, until the laws themselves will be changed to suit the corrupt irreligious feelings. Efforts of this kind are not wanting already in our brief history. The restraints

of the Lord's day have been disrelished by the pleasure-seeking, and the avaricious; and the Sabbath law has been changed by the highest authority of the nation, to suit these unholy feelings, so that the work of the government's agents may be done in every part of the land on holy time, without crime in the view of the law. The instruction of the Bible is not liked in certain quarters, and efforts are being made to exclude it by law, from the schools of the young. But the omniscience of God perfectly foresaw this tendency of depravity, and that a nation could not be prosperous with the best civil regulations, without religious principle to sustain them; therefore, when he would bless a nation by giving it a constitution, by revelation; when he would present a model of government for the imitation of surrounding nations, and the world, he establishes an order of religious instructions, as well as of civil rulers. He not only makes laws with corporeal penalties, but provides the means for diffusing, into every part of the nation, that religious education which would produce that love of wholesome law and obedience; which would lead to order, and render the infliction of the penalty unnecessary. The people then, as now, seemed more willing to admit the civil rule, than the religious restraint. They were more ready to take Moses for their ruler, than Aaron for their priest. Hence, an additional miracle had to be wrought on this last point. And the almond staff must blossom and bear fruit, to satisfy them that the offices of religion were as necessary to their national prosperity, as were the offices of government. The fact, that religious principle is necessary to originate a government of equal rights, and preserve



it, is proved by the history of nations. Wherever the Bible is unknown, there despotism reigns. A priesthood, it is true, there is, every where in heathenism, but not such a priesthood as God wrought miracles to establish. They teach the people, not the truths which God revealed, but the follies of superstition. The effect is, to keep the people in ignorance, rather than to give them knowledge of the truth. Hence, the influence of a corrupted priesthood has ever been the suppression of human right, and the firm support of tyranny. But, the sacred office, used for the purposes for which it was authenticated by heaven, and inculcating the truths which God has revealed for the instruction of mankind, has always been the firm supports of equitable and righteous laws. Under its influence, the old establishments of despotism crumble and fall, and a happier order of things spring up and flourish, as in a fruitful and cultivated garden.

Efforts have often been made by nations not sufficiently imbued with religious principle, to gain their freedom, but they have been unsuccessful; or if for a time they have accomplished their object, they have soon fallen into the gulf of anarchy, or into the *arms of a military despotism*. France broke the neck of kings, and guillotined the priesthood to worship at the shrine of freedom; but because religion was abandoned, she was soon glad to save her expiring life, by throwing herself upon the protection of a king. The South American States have heard the report of liberty, and have struggled hard to gain it; but Romanism has too much shut up the avenues of Bible knowledge, and excluded teachers on God's plan of instruction, and they have failed.

To this part of the continent, where it is our lot to dwell, our ancestors, the best instructed in religious truth, of the population of Europe, fled for a refuge. They brought with them the holy truths they had imbibed with the breath of their infancy, and their religious instructors, to teach them further in the heavenly doctrine. Here they planted the tree of independence, in the soil of Bible truth, and nourished it with their prayers. Here it has grown to be a great tree; its wide-spreading branches holding out its ripe fruit to distant nations, and its vernal blossoms attracting the admiration of distant climes. But, take away its soil, withdraw its nourishment, and no political maneuvering can make it live. As then, the belief and practice of religious truth and duty, are inseparable from national prosperity, and as it cannot be believed and done, without being known, and impressed upon the common mind; and as this will not be sufficiently done, without those whose office it is to do it, so the almond rod bloomed to affix heaven's high seal to an office which God had designed should make the nations bud and blossom as the rose. We have viewed the event, and the subject in one—and perhaps its least observed relations—and here we see it vested with importance. We have been looking at it, in reference to man's civil relations; let us now,

*Secondly*, view it with reference to his ecclesiastical relations:

As we emerge from our civil, to our spiritual relations, it grows in interest. As we leave those concerns which are temporal, and approach those which are spiritual, we open our eyes upon a wider field of vision; while we step over the line of the kingdoms which are merely of this world, and which

will all soon come to naught, and enter the precincts of that which shall never be moved, and which will be of growing importance, ever onward in eternity. The business of the original priesthood, was to make atonement for the people, to intercede for them, instruct them, and bless them in the name of the Lord; a part of this still belongs to the teaching office, according to the Savior's perpetual ordination, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name," &c. The existence of the church then, depends upon her divinely appointed officers. Whatever of beauty there is in Zion, the glory of the land; whatever of delight in frequenting her solemn assemblies; whatever of pleasure in drinking of the river, the "streams of which make glad the city of God;" whatever of joy in going to the house of God, in company where our best friends, our kindred dwell; whatever of hope to mingle in the songs of the upper temple, with the general assembly, and church of the first born, we are indebted for it all to the fact, that God has established the office of teachers in sacred things, and given to it, the seal of his approbation—that those who were originally dead rods, have, by grace, been made to bud, and bear fruit, and hold it forth to others. "I have chosen you, and ordained you," said Christ, "that you should go forth, and bear fruit." But,

*Thirdly*, a higher object in this miraculous event, was in reference to the Savior himself.

The office of the high priest doubtless had an important reference to him. The establishment of that priesthood, had a relation to the establishment of his. Both were proved by miracles. What the Levitical priest did typically, Christ did *really*, in making

atonement. What he did in intercession, by virtue of the typical sacrifice, Christ did by virtue of his *own*. If the typical priest and offering had not been proved beyond dispute to be of God's appointment, there would have been a breach in the proof, that Christ was the *sent* of God, and had a right to his high pretensions. The apostle Paul would have wanted the great body of his argument, which he has brought forth with such master power in the epistle to the Hebrews, to prove to the Jews, and Gentiles, that he was *the Christ*. Let us then, sit down by this blooming rod, and gather fruit for eternal life. While we view it,

*Fourthly*, as connected with our *salvation*.

1. As connected with the proof of atonement for sin.

2. With the Savior's intercession with God.

3. With the application of the Savior's work to us, as blossoms are attractive, and fruit is for use.

4. As indicating that there will be a succession in the holy office, of those who will hold forth the word of life, and exhibit the mature fruit of holiness, to be plucked by every succeeding generation of sinners, to the end of time.

The staff had not only full grown almonds, but also blossoms and buds for a future supply, when those which were ripe had fallen off. So the prayer which the Savior has taught to be offered to the Lord of the harvest, will be made and answered, that he would send more laborers into the harvest. From the stem of Jesse, and the branch grown from his root, shall continually spring forth inferior boughs, whose fruit will be for the healing of the nations, till all the ransomed of the Lord shall come to mount Zion with joy, to eat



of the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise above.

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## REMARKS.

1. We may learn the great responsibility which is attached to the office of the Gospel ministry. As we see, its influence is intimately connected, not only with the well-being of the church, but of the state—with 'man in his dearest earthly interests, and his spiritual and eternal welfare. Let us guard against exalting this office above the place where God has put it, or degrading it below it. On one of these extremes Popery erects itself as a hideous monster, on the other libertinism, and infidelity, brood in hideous deformity.

2. Remember the value, and improve the privileges God has so kindly and bountifully bestowed.

## LECTURE XIV.

### HEALING BY THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

"And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."—NUMBERS 21: 4—9

In order to natural vision, two things are necessary, the organ of sight, and sufficient light, with an adaptation between them. Were the eyes of our race as perfect as they are, without the light of the sun, nature would spread out her adorning, and invite us to behold her beauties in vain; and did the orb of day pour forth his beams in a flood of light, on a world where there was no organ fitted to receive it, so far as intelligent observation is concerned, it would be a profuse waste of his radiance. We here see, as every where else in nature, a delightful fitness of things. So it is in the economy of grace. There is need, not only for an organ of spiritual vision, but a medium of sight, and light to display the objects to be seen. The eagerness to

make discoveries in a region of total darkness, does not bring to view the unseen objects, or alleviate the case. On the other hand, the increase of light will not make things visible to the blind, or even tend to do it. Two things, then, were necessary to make the spiritual world visible to the men of our race: a sufficiency of light, and a spiritual organ, so constructed as to see. Man, in his fallen state, is destitute of both of these. The world by wisdom knew not God. As the sun is unseen, except by the shining of his rays; so the "natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The scheme of mercy provides for both these wants. This is the peculiar glory of the device. Some, indeed, conceive of it, and represent it, as if light only was necessary to be afforded in sufficient amount, and man's depravity would yield to its influence. But what can light effect upon sightless eyes? And such is man spiritually. He is represented, not only as blind, but even dead in trespasses and sins. Salvation is summarily embraced in these two things: The unfolding of spiritual objects, and producing and improving the faculties of perception and feeling. In the proper order of things, the objects to be seen, and the light by which they are to be discovered, should precede the percipient beings; so it was in nature at first. The world was filled with visible objects, and the sun majestically placed in the heavens to shine upon them, before man, the intelligent observer, was made to observe them; so the light of salvation now goes before our natural being, and urges itself upon our natural attention, among the first

objects of perception. So it is, too, with reference to our new creation: the light is first, for we are begotten by the word of truth; and our walking as children is in the light, not before it: "now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of the light." And the advancing path to heaven is one of light, increasing more and more unto the perfect day, and with this increase of the medium of vision, there is an increase of the organ of vision, until both are perfected in the full displays of a world of light.

The manner in which God unfolded the knowledge of a Savior to the world, bears a resemblance to that in which the objects of faith are more clearly discovered to the individual christian, in his advancement in holiness. This revelation has its morning twilight, as well as its meridian brightness. The object of infinite wisdom in giving the morning dawn, is to give also the noonday clearness; but in not giving it at once, in all its radiance, the capacity of the visual organ has been regarded. By its gradual approach, the eye is better fitted to endure it, and profit by it. Too much light, suddenly imparted, would make us blind. And the spiritual organ does not increase faster than the light. This is true in every individual case. It is true as a matter of experience. The blind man whom Christ restored, first saw men as trees walking, before he saw them as they were. The reason of this was not for want of sufficient light upon the objects, but it was owing to the remaining defect in the organ. The reason of such defective views of truth and duty now, among even the pious, is not the fault of the revelation, but of the perceiving sense; though this



may improve, the light will be still in advance of it. And this which is true here, will be so also in heaven. Though the light by which the Savior was revealed to the faith of the Jewish church was obscure, compared with that in which we rejoice, yet, it was more than they comprehended, from the imperfection of their faith. He who now lives under the noon of the Gospel day, and whose spiritual faculties have matured with the strength of the abundant light, can look with an open and full sight, at the objects which were then seen dimly through an image; but even to him, there are objects still beyond—a shadow of which affords to him all the knowledge which he has. But, as he advances, what appeared to him once as a land of visions, becomes peopled with reality and life. So to eternity, doubtless, the prospect will widen to the view of the redeemed, and as it widens will be filled with new objects of admiration and delight. It may appear to us surprising to find Israel here, in the fortieth year from their deliverance out of Egypt, where we saw them the first month of their journey, by the Red sea; and even then, under the conduct of their heavenly guide, taking a compass round the whole land of Edom. But we may be even more surprised to find them, after so long a period of severe discipline, shewing the same stubbornness and discontent which they showed at the beginning. We expect some progress to be made, under the influence of favored means, in the course of revolving years. But, alas! we need not go to the Jews for the evidence of an ingratitude which admits of no excuse; a stupidity which no intelligence can account for; a rashness which no reason can explain. We need not travel into the deserts

of Arabia—to the days of the golden calf—to the waters of Meribah—to find proofs of the same spirit. We have only to look into our own hearts, and lives, to be satisfied that the same spirit exists, with such offensiveness, as to afford us good reason to abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

We are too little aware of the evil of discontent. We do not reflect that it is to arraign the wisdom and goodness of God, and tends only to increase the evil under which we complain. Under the influence of this feeling, the wonders God had done for them, the deliverance from Egypt, the miraculous stream that followed them, the manna from heaven, must all be accounted as nothing, when a present inconvenience is suffered. God sometimes leaves this evil affection to punish itself; but in this instance he was provoked to add a heavy, external chastisement. "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." We are not to suppose that these serpents were produced for the occasion, but were there in abundance before, and the miracle rather appears in restraining them so many years, so that they did not injure them before. We are not so likely to notice the blessings we receive in the way of prevention of evil, as in its removal. We do not realize that we are all the time surrounded with objects which need only a commission to make our life intolerable. The air we breathe, the food we eat, by a slight derangement, may be turned into bitterness and death. He can arm a fly with force sufficient for our destruction. The scorpions of the wilderness would soon have proved too strong for the hosts

of Israel, had not the Lord who, for their humiliation permitted them thus to be afflicted, provided for them a remedy. The manner by which this was done, marks the peculiarity by which God governs the world, and enables us to check, or overcome the evils by which we are surrounded. He does not destroy the serpents, or drive them into another part of the desert. This would have effectually removed the danger, and rendered the provision of a cure unnecessary. But they are allowed to remain, and exert their destructive influence; and another way is provided to counteract it. Such is the general economy of God's government, both in the physical and moral world. He who holds all things under his control, could have prevented the causes of natural evil, but he has not done it; and we are left to oppose the natural sufferings of our nature by the employment of our skill and industry, in applying those antidotes which are provided in nature. The serpent is not destroyed, but we are pointed to a cure. God might lay an interdict upon the old serpent, the foe of man's spiritual nature, or have restrained his influence at the first, so that he would not have poisoned the race with the malignity of sin, and wasted it with its deadly effects; but his proceeding has been otherwise: and our attention is directed to the Savior of the world as the perfect remedy for the existing evil. To prefigure this, was doubtless one object of these occurrences. Many particulars of the Jewish history, and economy had an interest which extended far beyond the present time. The best commentary on this piece of history is by the Savior himself, in his conversation with the Jewish ruler, (John 3,) "As

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," &c. Here a striking resemblance is presented, between the elevation of the brazen serpent, and that of Christ on the cross, and the benign effects, in each case, to the suffering, and the dying. Though Moses, in what he did in raising the brazen serpent in view of the Israelitish camp, may not have seen the whole import of his action; and like the prophets when they foretold the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, did not understand the import of their own predictions, or what manner of time was signified by them; yet he was teaching the world the all important truth of the Savior's sacrifice, and presenting in action, what the Savior did in words, when he said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." This was a morning ray, of which his sacrifice was the noonday—a shadowy representation, by an effect upon the bodies of men by beholding a material substance, of what faith does to the soul, by beholding a crucified Redeemer. Let us look at some of the points of resemblance, and be further instructed in a truth so fundamental to our hopes, and which, as christians, we bind so near our hearts.

First, It was the folly and sin of the murmuring Israelites, which exposed them to the ravages of these scorpions of the wilderness; so it was by hearkening to the *deceiver* at first, and by cherishing sin now, and tampering with its illusions, that our souls wither under its paralyzing effects, and are liable to death eternal. The effect of the serpent of the wilderness upon the natural life was certain death, if not counteracted by the healing effect of God's appointed remedy; so the fiery darts of the wicked will burn up the sinner's spirit,



unless they are quenched by the blood of atonement, and the washing of regeneration.

Second, There was no natural efficacy in the image of the serpent to effect the cure. It was owing to God's appointment, that it proved effectual. The availableness of Christ's sacrifice for a guilty world does not depend merely upon the fact that he *died*, however great the display of love which he made in that extraordinary death, but upon the appointment of the Father to that service, and the arrangement to accept of the sacrifice in the room of the guilty. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The salvation is connected with the gift of God for that purpose. It is the *will* of the Father, that whosoever seeth the Son, and believeth in him, "should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and this gives it efficacy.

Third, It was a method of cure that might be easily put in practice by the dying Israelite. It was only to look from every part of the camp and live; so the command of the Gospel is, Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved.

Fourth, It was effectual in every case—none died who looked to the remedy; so of the Gospel remedy: we are assured that he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, and he that believeth on him shall never be put to shame.

Fifth, It had to be looked to, that the benefit be received. There must be a correspondence between the will of God in the appointment, and the will of the sufferer in receiving it. He might object, that he could see no good it would do to look at the lifeless image. It was impossible for him to know

the good, till he had made the experiment. The looking was first, but he had only to hesitate, to die; so it is with you, if you do not look to a crucified Savior. Look and live.

This method of cure did not encourage those once bitten, to put themselves in the way of these serpents to be bitten again. It did not make them love them. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? It was a remedy that could be frequently repeated. The remedy did not depend upon the strength of the eyesight. The cure was not promoted by the patient looking within at himself, at the progress of the cure. It was the only cure. The efficacy was not in the look, but in God's appointment and blessing.

## LECTURE XV.

### BALAAM REBUKED.

And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, what have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, because thou hast mocked me; I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine, unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, nay. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.—NUMBERS 22: 28-31.

Things in nature, which, in themselves are most wonderful, by their frequency, soon cease to excite our surprise. That the sun should maintain his daily course in the heavens; that the vegetable kingdom should go on in its annual progress of growth and maturity, of decline and death, and again of resuscitated life; that the functions of animal life should continue the flow of health amidst so many contingencies, and yet fail to excite our admiration, is only because they are the objects of continual notice. Again, what is more wonderful than the gift of speech to man—that mysterious art, by which the workings of the immaterial mind are made audible and intelligent, and the most tender and delicate feelings of the soul communicated to other hearts, to strike the cords in unison, and bring into play with it the corresponding sympathy? Strange that an organization of clay can be fitted into such a perfect and enduring instrument, as ever to move at the bidding of the mind, to make its secret movements known

to a listening world without. But every creature is what God makes it, who in wisdom has made all his works, and whose ways are past finding out. Though man at his creation was furnished with articulate organs, there is reason to believe he would not have known how to use them for the purpose intended, without supernatural teaching. And thus the science of language owes its origin to God, as well as the instrument by which it is used. Had Adam even known that certain sounds could communicate thought, and certain movements of the tongue would give another the idea of a material or immaterial thing—created as he was, in manhood—he could not at once, according to the ordinary laws of using the organs of speech, have used them to express the ideas of his mind. Two difficulties are to be overcome in articulate speech. One is, to learn the sounds which are applied by common consent to certain ideas. This requires time, and particular attention, and engages the first years of childhood. The other is, the learning to use the articulate organs, so as to express these sounds. Such is the insuperable nature of these two difficulties, that it is doubted whether, if man had been left without superior assistance, he would ever have overcome them. But the art being communicated to the parents of the race, all their children have learned it. This gift has been withheld from the inferior creation, except to a very limited extent, in which the lower animals can express their wants by certain inarticulate sounds. Hence, what is common and easy to us, in them becomes miraculous. They are deficient in mental endowments to understand the various ideas to which the sounds of language are applied, and also in the physical organs necessary



for articulate speech. But, the uniform laws of nature, being nothing else than the regular operation of divine agency, God, when he chooses, for sufficient reasons, can as easily act above these laws, as he can by them. When it is proper that the madness of a prophet should be rebuked, the dumb ass can speak with man's voice, as easily as the prophet, whose office it is to admonish others.

Thus, all nature shews obedience to the will of its great author; and God, who is seen supreme as Creator, is also seen supreme as the Ruler of his workmanship; and nature, and time, and earth, and skies proclaim their author, God. But when we hear the animal, on which the son of Bosor rides, as the legate of kings, speak to give counsel to its honored rider, we seek for an object worthy of such a departure from customary rules. What was there then, in the character and present pursuit of Balaam, to justify such an interposition, and what general instruction is it designed to afford to the world? This distinguished personage of the east, is described to us by his parentage; by his country; by his profession, and present business. The place of his residence was in the country where Abraham himself was born, and lived till his seventy-fifth year. The adjacent country, to a great distance, being a plain, it was favorable for the observation of the heavenly bodies, the science of astronomy was early cultivated there. Out of this, grew the pretended science of astrology, or the supposed power of foretelling future events, from the position and influence of the stars. Little knowledge is usually connected with pride and presumption. In this case, it arrogated to itself the power of controlling these great luminaries; and ignorance, superstition, and credulity

easily admitted the insolent claim, and resorted to it. This appears to have been the profession of Balaam, and it was probably to this skill and power, that Balak had recourse for assistance against Israel. The king of Moab, alarmed at the war-like appearance of the host of Israel, and their recent success, diffident of his strength, either to repel invasion, or make the attack, enters into an alliance with the people of Midian, where Moses himself had lived, for his defence. But still doubtful of the strength of their united arms, they agree to have recourse to divination in aid of the sword, and think of conquering by the power of enchantment, those whom they were afraid to encounter in the field. For this purpose they sent a joint embassy to Balaam, the most noted of the art within their reach, saying, "Come now therefore, I pray thee, and curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me." Balaam's vanity could not well avoid being uplifted by such a message. His covetousness also must be gratified, when princely presents are poured at his feet, as the reward of divination. His heart seems to be won from the first moment, and all that follows is a struggle between inclination and conscience, in which the former at length gains the victory. He receives the messengers with great kindness: for even the most avaricious can be liberal when he expects to make greater gain by it. A camel loaded with the riches of Canaan, can easily find accommodations for its master in the house of one as niggardly even as Laban, when he is looking for years of profitable service, without giving a compensation.

The answer of God to Balaam, at the first, was clear and unequivocal, "Thou shalt not go with

them." But the clear decisions of duty are often insufficient to silence the claims of interest, and inclination, combining their arguments against it. Plausible pretexts are invented to silence the voice of authority, and conscience is cheated into a truce with the passions, when gain is expected by the sacrifice of her rights. Balaam's equivocal answer to the messengers stimulates the hope of their master, that he may yet become subservient to his purpose, by further importunity, and richer rewards. When an individual tampers with temptation, against the plain dictates of duty, he is likely to surrender the fortress to his assailant, and become an easy prey to his seducer. God himself, his authority being once disregarded, seems to withhold restraint, and permit the sinner to go in his chosen way, with less obstruction. This withdrawal of restraint, and apparent prosperity in a forbidden course, he easily construes into approval of the way he has taken, because he wishes to have it so. But present success in a wrong course, however shielded by plausible reasons, is no security that God will never meet such an one in anger, and hedge up his way, that he can proceed no further. A seeming permission of Providence to run in a way on which we are forbidden to enter, does not prove that we were mistaken in our judgment of the duty in the outset; but if conscience has been conquered in the beginning, the more certain conclusion should be, that God has given us up to our own ways, to walk in our own delusions, to fill up the cup of iniquity, that wrath may come upon us to the uttermost.

Balaam, subduing his first convictions, proceeds with the messengers a certain length without

interruption, till the animal on which he rode turned out of the way into the field. But what was this little incident to a man whose soul was full of the ardor of a favorite pursuit. Providential hindrances, he might easily reason, may be expected in the most laudable pursuit, and happen alike to the evil and the good. The voice of God uttered clearly at the beginning, and disregarded, is not likely to be better attended to when it is heard only through the fainter echoes of his providence. He who refuses obedience to the plainer injunctions of duty, is not likely to be reclaimed by obscurer hints. He who refuses not to enter upon a wrong course, requires a stronger force to stop him, after he has acquired a *momentum* by progress. The stone in its progress down a declivity, is easier stopped at the top, than any where else till it reaches the bottom. A weight that may be poised by the finger at one time, at another becomes resistless; and though the opposing obstacles should be increased, the power to be opposed increases more. Hence, the easy solution of many a headlong sinner's impetuous, and downward course. God instead of opposing stronger resistance, usually opposes weaker. And if vanquished conscience still chides in her captivity, the ear is deafer, and the passions more insatiable, and the escape of him, who has begun to yield, more hopeless. Balaam sees the erring of the ass, but not his own. He chastises it, without reflecting that it is he himself deserves it. He sees the providential difficulty, but he does not see the angel and the drawn sword which occasion it. How often is this illustrated in every day experience of ordinary occurrences, both in the prosperous and adverse events of life. The incident is seen,



but the God who makes it is unseen. The stupid animal sees the cause, while the intelligent, but more stupid rider, looks only at the effect. It sees the sword overhanging the life of its master; he beats it with his staff because it will not go on, and drive him against its unsheathed point. But he who shuts his eyes against the light, and is bent upon his own gratification, is permitted to proceed till a worse evil befalls him. He who is too blind to see the angel of mercy, and the sword of justice before him, is allowed to advance, and feel a danger which he will not see; and the pressure of his foot against the wall of the vineyards may teach him more than he was willing to learn in the open field. But "bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestal, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." He concludes, perhaps, because it is his foot, and not his head, it was merely an accident, and the ass is the cause, and a severer correction will give her caution. As the sinner is determined, the obstructing angel recedes, for further trial, and places himself where he must be met, and recognized. The transgressor is sometimes permitted to go on into a narrow place—God hedges up his way so as to make himself to be seen in the providence. The rebellious spirit may rave against the circumstances, as the ox unaccustomed to the yoke, but the fetters which confine him are too strong for him to break, till he is forced to hear the rod, and him that appointed it. When every effort to get onward is useless, the speechless incidents speak, the Lord opens the eyes of the blinded offender, and shows himself as the cause of the present and former difficulties; he falls before his Maker, and confesses his sins. But confessing, and forsaking, are not

always connected. Pharaoh said, "I have sinned." Ahab humbled himself, and put on sackcloth. Judas said, "I have betrayed innocent blood." Balaam said, "I have sinned, and went on with the princes of Balak." He had heard God say, "Thou shalt not go with them"—he had been turned out of the way—he had been pressed against the wall—he had heard the dumb ass speak with man's voice, forbidding his madness—he had seen the drawn sword of the angel, and heard his voice convincing him of sin; yet his sinful inclinations were stronger than all, and he went on to his reward, and his ruin.

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#### REMARKS.

This solitary instance of a beast of burden speaking with the voice and intelligence of a man, was designed not only to rebuke the madness of this prophet, but the madness of a world. It is the voice of God through the organs of the inferior race, against man, its lord by creation.

First. Against man in his selfishness.

Balaam to aggrandize himself, would have cursed and destroyed all the hosts of the Lord, and overturned all the goodly tents of Jacob. This selfishness has been styled the universal form of human depravity, and every sin is only a modification of it. It would subordinate God, and his creation, to itself. Were it not that this principle works its own correction often, society would break up in all its forms, and the earth become a battle field.

Second. In his covetousness, one particular form of selfishness, which includes, 1. Rapacity, which is covetousness *grasping*. 2. Parsimony, which is

covetousness parting with its *life blood*. 3. Avarice, which is covetousness *hoarding*.

The reward of unrighteousness was full in the eye and heart of Balaam, and it veiled his sight, so that God was unseen. Conscience was hushed to silence, the angel and the sword were noticed as *nothing*, before the eager rush of his passions to grasp their object; so still with the eye fixed only on mammon, the grave and *hell* itself are as motes in the sunbeam. To this worldly-wise frugality, a shilling is worth more than the onward progress of Israel to the land of promise; and for a dollar it will curse the church, or suffer her to be a reproach among the nations from age to age.

Third. In his stupidity. The dumb ass reproaches him.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." Man in the assumption of his lofty dignity, never looks more humbled than when an ass becomes his preceptor.

"The brutes obey their God,  
And bow their necks to men;  
But we more base, more brutish things,  
Reject his easy reign."

Fourth. In the progress of his sinfulness.

The commencement of a sinful course, is "as the letting out of waters." It increases impetuously. Balaam hearkened to the messengers. He proceeded against the will of God, which he knew. He despised reproof, and at last died a disgraceful death, with the princes of Midian, mutual helpers in crime. If you would die the death of the right-

eous, you must live his life. Balaam desired the one, and refused the other. He failed of his desire, and died as he had lived. Seek most what he neglected, and you shall live.



## LECTURE XVI.

### PASSAGE OF JORDAN.

“And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zarethan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.”—JOSHUA 3: 15—18.

As time advances, new events are perpetually occurring, and hastening on to some greater consummation. In the view of omniscience, and under the government of God, no event is solitary and unconnected; but each is a part of a great scheme of providence, for effecting some grand result.

This portion of Hebrew history introduces us into a new era, and one to which all the previous events, both ordinary and miraculous, in the history of this wonderful people, have been tending, and preparing the way. The deliverance from Egypt, the wonders of the Red sea, and the tedious meanderings of the wilderness, would all have been unmeaning, if the obtaining of the promised inheritance had not been in prospect. Now the forty years of painful delay, the penalty of their sinful murmurings, is nearly expired, and they have approached the confines of their long looked for dwelling place. They are encamped on the east-

ern bank of the Jordan, and looking over upon its beautiful plains, awaiting the orders of their *Supreme Director*. Though difficulties have beset them all the way, and but a step is between them and Canaan's land, that step is one of danger, such as they know not how to take. A step, not upon the ground, the place of walking safely, but upon the water, where there is no standing. Such is human life. However long it is preserved, however many the difficulties through which we have passed, however many the interpositions of a kind Providence in our behalf, we never get beyond the prospect of new trial, or the need of heavenly assistance, so long as we abide in this tabernacle. The better country is the object of hope, and not of possession. The last step of the christian sojourner, which separates between the country of his pilgrimage, and his permanent home, is as unknown as any before, until the ark of the covenant goes before, and marks the place of his footsteps.

But in the event before us, we hear no more of Moses, who has conducted us so often through the events of miraculous history, and given so much interest to the story. We seem to look round with anxiety, and inquire in surprise, Where is he who achieved the deliverance of the tribes, and conducted them through so many dangers and triumphs? who so long bore the weight of public affairs, and managed them with so much honor and success? We ask with grief, almost approaching to murmur, against the providence which arrested his progress, and blighted his sanguine hopes, just at the threshold of realizing them—hopes cherished by eighty years anxiety, and forty years successful

progress toward the desirable consummation. But such was not the will of God; and Moses had cheerfully transferred his commission, and yielded up his life on the top of mount Nebo, with his last look enlivened by the beauties of the land of promise, and his dying faith invigorated with the assurance, that Israel should be put into the possession, and that therefore his labor had not been in vain. As we would naturally suppose, he had been very desirous to accomplish what he had with so much self-denial undertaken, and brought so near a happy termination. For this he had earnestly prayed once and again. But in this he was not heard; and the rod which had divided the Red sea was to be laid aside before the crossing of Jordan, and the voice that there exhorted the host to go forward, was to be silent in death. Though his private and public life was distinguished by excellencies, surpassed only by that greater *prophet* that was to be raised up like unto him; though distinguished for meekness above all others; yet he offended once, in speaking unadvisedly with his lips, at the waters of strife: for this, the honor of conducting Israel into Canaan was conferred upon another. Moses offended on the strongest side of his character. If the strongest proves his weakness where he is strongest, what will those do whose strongest virtues are not equal to his weakest? We see "an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Surely all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass." Though Moses dies; the church lives—though her endeared officers fall; her Supreme Head survives—though the rod, with its ripe fruit and vernal blossoms, is to be laid up

in the tabernacle; the ark will go on, and mark the pathway across the waters—and, though a Moses dies; a Joshua will take his place, as the leader of the Lord's host. What one sees by faith, as certainly to come to pass; another will see with his eyes, and effect with his hands, till all the ransomed of the Lord shall come to mount Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. The wastes of death are supplied by the productions of grace; and the falling of the trees of the hand's planting, is supplied by the willows by the water courses. God will not want instruments, when he has work to be done. But if the dying faith of Moses anticipates with confidence the triumph of the people, with whose prosperity he had been identified in life, and in death, he does not expect this without rational means, and proper human instruments; and like the parent of an endeared household, he adjusts every proper arrangement before he dies; and, by divine direction, designates his successor in the chief magistracy of the nation. Who so fit as Joshua, who had been trained for a length of time to the public service, as his chief minister? This nomination the people confirmed by a popular vote, saying, "According as we hearkened to Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses." As God had been with Moses by miraculous agency, confirming his authority and proving his mission, inspiring the people with confidence and making their obedience reasonable; so the Lord was about to magnify Joshua in the sight of all Israel, that they might fear him, as they had feared Moses all the days of his life. For this purpose, a man for every tribe was to be selected, and the priests bear-



nig the ark were to approach the edge of the water. This being done, the Lord would do what followed. And "the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap," and those which came down toward the sea failed, and the people passed over right against Jericho. This miracle was remarkable for occurring at the time at which it did. The ordinary width of Jordan is variously stated, but from the best account not supposed to exceed thirty yards, with a depth of about three feet. But at the time of harvest, which was the time they passed, it overflows all its banks.

The plain of Jericho, says Buckingham, is six or seven miles in width. Near the river the plain sinks; the distance across this lower space is about a mile. Over the whole of this lower plain the river overflows, by the melting of the snows upon mount Lebanon. This we may suppose to have been filled at this time, with a rapid current, to the width of a mile. This torrent, as by an impassable wall, was suddenly stopped in its natural course to the Dead sea, made to stand upright, and run back towards its source in the mountains, while that which was below went on according to the common law. It is a useful, as well as beautiful provision of nature, that the earth is so constructed that the streams should have their sources in elevations, and the water should be subject to the common law of gravity, as to seek to fill up the lower places. Were this simple tendency universally counteracted, and the water flow any way, as readily as the way it does, the whole earth would be an offensive marsh, and become unfit for the habitation of man or beast. So much are we indebted for a comfortable existence, to the regular

operations of the most common and unobserved rules, according to which Divine agency governs material nature. It is as easy for God to make the water of the earth to run upward, as the way it does; but because it is best for the happiness of the races, he gives it its present inclination. And because a more important end could be answered by causing the Jordan to roll back toward its source, it was done. God wills it, and nature obeys. But God does not will to counteract natural laws, except for moral and spiritual purposes. The spiritual creation is more valuable than the physical. When the good of the moral requires it, the physical must yield. The whole fabric of creation was made as a theatre for moral displays; when these have all been exhibited, the physical creation will be removed, as the scaffolding of a great edifice, and the spiritual remain, as the manifold wisdom of God.

Let us, then, look for some of the moral and spiritual purposes, which this extraordinary event was designed to answer.—1. It was designed to establish the authority of Joshua, as the Chief Magistrate of the Hebrew Republic, and successor of Moses. With reference to this, the Lord said to him, "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." God magnified him, because he would have the people to do it. Those are the most truly great, with whom God is, and whom he employs, and owns in his service. By the dividing of the sea, Israel was convinced that God was with Moses; therefore they are said to be baptized unto Moses in the sea. And now by the dividing of Jordan, they are

to be convinced that God is in like manner with Joshua, in bringing them into Canaan. It was designed to impress the world that Government is an ordinance of God, and that the powers that be, are ordained of God; that magistrates, who fulfill the duties of their station, are to be honored and esteemed as public blessings, and be obeyed—not from fear of punishment, for conscience sake. Man, in his depravity, is such an outlaw with reference to all authority, human and divine, that he must be taught obedience, by inanimate nature changing her laws, to shew him the example.—2. It was designed to be a sure pledge of the conquest of Canaan. “Hereby,” says Joshua to the people, “ye shall know that God will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites.” What can stand in his way, before whom rivers are divided and dried up. How could they stand their ground, when Jordan itself was driven back. This assurance, that God was with them, would enable one to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight. So God’s gracious interpositions in behalf of his church ought to strengthen our faith, and hope for the future, and encourage every one in the onward conquest of his spiritual enemies. If Jordan’s flood cannot keep them out, the forces of Canaan cannot turn them out, after they have taken possession. He that hath begun a good work in you, will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. The certainty of the accomplishment, depends upon the effectual commencement. If God be with you, to deliver you from Egypt, he will not forsake you at Jordan, and much less in Canaan. He that has done so much, will not fail to do what remains. His work already done, as well as his

promise, become a security for what is yet to be done. What affords encouragement to those who follow where the Lord leads them, produces dismay to their enemies. When all the kings westward heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan, their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.—3. It was to be a memorial to all the nations of the earth, of the existence, attributes, and government of the one, only, living, and true God. For this purpose a monument was erected in Gilgal, of the stones taken from the river, that the children of every coming generation might be taught what the Lord did in drying up the waters; that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord your God forever. Correct knowledge of God is *fundamental in all* religion, and necessary to good citizenship; yet, man is strangely prone to corrupt this knowledge, and change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image. Hence, we see an important reason for so many direct, and miraculous interpositions in the establishment of the Jewish, and christian systems. Monuments are every where erected, as perpetual remembrancers of this truth; yet idolatry has been the almost universal sin of the world. Every where in heathenism the images of man's device have overturned the pillars which God erected, and man has been debased in proportion. The light of the Jewish religion was at one time almost extinguished by it; and the christian religion, as it faded in the dark shades of Romanism, almost ceased to reflect the true image of its divine author, till the reformation drove away a part of the dark clouds



which obscured it. And even yet, after almost six thousand years of his continual manifestations, and speaking monuments of Jehovah standing eminent every where in nature, providence, and *grace*, the glowing inscriptions of his name and attributes are seen and read by few; and millions of those who profess to take God for their law-giver, and Jesus Christ for their teacher, bow the knee to an *image*, venerate man departed as a demigod, and man living, in the person of a Pope, as the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth. Surely there is need to improve the design of the pillar in Gilgal. And when your children shall ask, "What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land; that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord; that ye might fear the Lord your God forever,"

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REMARKS.

First. In this event you may contemplate the certain fulfillment of Divine promise. 1. In reference to the future prosperity and glory of the church on earth. Of her future greatness God has spoken much greater things than he did of her, in her most privileged state in Canaan. In her widest extension there, the limits of the land of promise were to be her boundary; but in her future greatness, the world only is to confine her. "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; and the Lord be unto her an everlasting light, and God her glory. "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in

his time." These promises are made by the same God that promised Canaan to Abraham four hundred and seventy years before his descendants stood triumphantly on the plains of Jericho. They must be fulfilled, though all nations are the sacrifice, and nature herself be overturned.

Second. The christian may be encouraged in reference to the future inheritance for himself. Many a dark scene had appeared to Abraham, and his descendants, since God first encouraged him to expect Canaan as his residence. Often God interposed to effect the object, and at last it is done. Through seas, and rivers, and parched deserts, they at last reach the promised inheritance. So every sincere follower of the Savior may at length hope to arrive safely in heaven.

Third. The overthrow of the wicked is as certain as the triumph of his friends. They most signally occur together.

## LECTURE XVII.

### DESTRUCTION OF JERICHO.

“So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city: And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.”

JOSHUA 6: 20, 21.

War has been the trade of man. Strange as it might seem, the practice of killing each other has been reduced to rules, taught as a science, and learned as an art; and he who has made the greatest progress in the knowledge of it, and has been most successful in the practice, has become the most distinguished among his fellow men, been honored most while living, and eulogized when dead. The way to earthly glory has been through the field of blood; and he who could take the lives of the most of his fellow men, with the greatest ease, was the most sure of renown. Under this view of honor, or of securing dominion, or of defending rights, the earth has been made a battle field, and been filled with the groans of the dying; become a graveyard for the dead, and been bedewed with the tears of widows and orphans. Strange, that this should be the case among beings of the same tribe, kindred and family; that brothers of the same father, children of the same mother, should thus apply themselves to the business of each others destruction. Surely there are sources of suffering

enough in the natural, and providential circumstances of our condition, without every nation becoming the enemy of its neighbor, and every man the foe of his fellow. Our race presents the only instance of the same species being arrayed on a great scale for the destruction of itself. Among the inferior tribes, any general destructive warfare is of one species upon another; but the same species does not combine in parties to destroy itself. In the class of beings above man in intelligence and holiness, nothing of this appears of course. Among devils we have never heard of a war to weaken their own forces. Man, in many respects, is an anomaly in creation. When he does not combine in parts, to kill opposing parts, so self-willed and pugnacious is his nature, that he is always opposing and opposed, in reference to some object of opinion, or pursuit; so that objects most beneficial to the race, and most conducive to its happiness, fail of being carried into effect. This propensity, which is so dishonorable to man, and so pernicious to his interest, does not seem to grow old, and decline with the age of the world; but like man in his dotage, while he is less able and perhaps less inclined to go out to battle in the field, he is more petulant, and factious, in the corner. While the nations at present seem somewhat less disposed at once to kindle and blow the fire of ambition, to sound the trumpet of war, and charge the cannon for the combat on the great field of conflict, they are disposed, as ever, to employ the smaller arms in party strife; so that in no civil, or ecclesiastical matters, of great general interest and high importance to the common happiness of the race, can there be any universal, united, and harmonious action.



Thus, by contrary feeling and action, every good cause languishes, and the general prosperity is impeded. But in the case before us, we have an instance of the Lord himself ordering to the battle, commanding extermination, exciting the host, and achieving the victory. Can the authority of God be claimed for human butchery, and indiscriminate bloodshed? He who appeared unto Joshua with his sword drawn in his hand, as the captain of the Lord's host, said unto him, "See I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor."

The extirpation of the Canaanites by the Jews, according to the divine command, has been urged by the opposers of the Bible, as an act of the greatest *cruelty* and *injustice*. To this objection, the following ideas may be submitted in reply:

First. That the Canaanites were not the original possessors, and that Hebrew herdsmen had several hundred years before occupied the land of Palestine, and never surrendered their right. When they claimed the territory, they only asserted their ancient right; which being refused, according to the commonly acknowledged rights of nations, they were justifiable in obtaining it by force.

Second. They were a most depraved and idolatrous race, and in the time of Abraham were devoted to destruction; but their iniquity was not yet full; that is, they were not arrived to such a length of impiety, as demanded their immediate destruction. A merciful Providence lengthened out the period of their probation for four hundred years, under which they became no better, but worse; and now God made the Israelites the executioners of his vengeance. That God had a

right, as the righteous ruler of the world, to destroy them by famine, or pestilence, or some other stroke of justice, none, perhaps, will be disposed to dispute; and if so, why might he not, with equal propriety, do it by the sword of Israel.

Third, The justice of their punishment appears also from the fact, which seems to be implied, that they might have preserved themselves by *repentance*, forsaking their wicked practices, and attaching themselves to the service of the God of Israel, as did the Gibeonites, and Rahab, a part of their number.

As a fourth justification, their destruction is not to be attributed to Israel wholly, even as instruments, but to God directly, who wrought miracles to effect it.

We are under the necessity of concluding, that this war upon the Canaanites was right, though it was apparently a violation of the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." It was the sinfulness of the people of Canaan which made it right. So, sin in one of the parties, or both, is the cause of all the wars which have desolated the world. Yet, we do not suppose that it should be inferred from this, that no war is righteous on either side, whatever be the circumstances. Men always show their wickedness, or their weakness, when they find fault with the government of God, or prescribe to him the rules of his administration, and dictate what his word should be. As we have just seen the law, and the proceedings of Joshua, in extirpating the Canaanites, has been pronounced cruel and unjust, and brought as a reason against the Bible which properly considered leaves no foundation for such a charge. It is a more becoming

disposition in us, to learn what God has spoken and done, than to dictate what he should say and do.

We have heard it said by more than one public teacher lately, in reference to another subject, that if the Bible ever taught the doctrine of property in man, they would burn the Bible and become Infidels; and that some Satan had got in the place of God, to make such a revelation, &c. Now, for our part, we do not see, why the objection we have noticed as brought against the Bible for its cruelty in authorizing the destruction of the nations of Canaan, is not more plausible than this last; unless it should appear, that it was more cruel to preserve life, than to take it way. Few would think, that if Joshua had preserved the inhabitants, and required them to be taught the Jewish religion, and to worship the true God, and permitted them to be incorporated with the Jewish church, that he was dealing with them more cruelly, than to put them indiscriminately to death. If God has a right over the life of men who are violators of his law, to take it away when, and by what instrumentality he pleases, we do not see why he may not, for the same reason, or a much more plausible one, have a right, and if he sees proper, exercise it, and place men where they would not enjoy all their natural liberty. Or, if men ever have the right to kill in war, why, for a better reason, may they not make their captives, subservient under restrictions to their will. If they have a right over the life, why may they not have over the liberty. The law which has a claim for the execution of an offender, surely has a claim for his imprisonment for life in the State prison. If he be justly exposed to the higher penalty, he must of course be to the less. I do not now dis-

cuss the question, whether under the present dispensation of God's government, one nation has a right, in any circumstances, to take the life of another, or a part of it; or the question whether one nation has a right to deprive another, or a part of it, for life, of what is regarded as its natural rights: only this we have to say, that he who reads that God gives orders to one nation to extirpate another, and believes it to be the word of God, ought not to stand aghast if he finds in the same word, in another place and time, what seems to be a permission, for purposes and reasons, all of which perhaps he does not know, to make servants of men; that he who believes that the people of Jericho were destroyed by the will of God, need not become skeptical when he reads that the Gibeonites were made "hewers of wood and drawers of water" in their generations—that he who hears, and believes God to say, that Amelek shall be blotted out forever, need not turn pale when he hears God say, in reference to other sinners, that of the heathen that are round about you, of them shall ye buy; and they shall be your possession; servants forever—that if he is a believer in the one law, he need not be an infidel in the other. If he can believe the greater, he may believe the less. If God without infringing his moral government may put men to death by human instruments, he may, for as good a reason, make them perpetual servants by human instruments. As to the matter of fact whether he has done this, I do not now prove or disprove, but only say, that the moral government of God would not prevent him from doing so, if he thought proper, as some seem to take for granted.

Jericho was a walled city, about six miles west



from Jordan, and the first that opposed itself after they entered the land. It was no doubt one of those cities to which the discouraged and unbelieving spies referred, when they made the heart of the people faint by describing the cities with walls up to heaven. As if to confound this unbelief, God seems determined to show how feeble the strongest opposition is, when it stands in the way of the execution of his will, and that his word and promise should be implicitly relied on in the face of all discouragements. That the interposition of God might be the more distinctly seen, they were not required to put themselves in battle array, or to fight, but merely to walk around the city once each day for six days, and on the seventh seven times. These marches were to be accompanied with the ark, the symbol of God's presence, and the blowing of rams' horns. These means were utterly inadequate to produce the desired result, and seemed to have no fitness to the end in view. And doubtless the use of them exposed the Israelites to the contempt of their adversaries. It was such a mode of attack as they had never seen or heard of, and looked more like the sports of boyhood, than the bravery of experienced soldiers, or the skill of good generalship. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." That the presence and power of the efficient agent may be more certainly and distinctly seen, and praise be given to whom it is due, the weakest and most unlikely instruments are often selected.

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REMARKS.

That this event is capable of being applied to

evangelical uses, and of affording us instruction in spiritual things, may be inferred from what the Apostle Paul says of it, (Heb. 11: 30,) "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." Let us inquire in what sense it was done by faith. It was evidently done by the invisible power, and miraculous agency of God; yet, the apostle says it was done by faith. It was by faith,

First, As it was by the influence of this principle that they were induced to obey, without seeing any natural connection between their obedience and the object in view.

All the different aspects of religion which appear among men, may, perhaps, be reduced to four causes, as their origin. 1. Mysticism; 2. Rationalism; 3. A reliance on the efficacy and merit of works; and, 4. Faith.

The first supposes religion to be a system of mysteries, which it would be presumption to attempt to understand, and which proceeds from man by a standing and continued inspiration. This is the parent of all superstition, and fanaticism; and is the fostering nurse of all the paganism of the heathen world, and of the papacy in christendom, and fanaticism every where.

The second, Rationalism, is the opposite of this, and believes in no revelation of truth, or duty, which does not level itself to the scrutiny of depraved reason, and pass with acceptance this fiery ordeal. This is the prolific source of infidelity in its various degrees and shades of difference; of erroneous views of doctrinal truth among those who receive the word of God professedly, and of neglect of duty, or of refusal of obedience, except

so far as a discovered interest prompts to duty.

The third principle, Merit of Works, prompts to obedience, and multiplies duties beyond God's requirement; for the reason, that the more is done, the more abundant and certain will be the reward, and the performer of them will be more certainly the favorite of heaven. Hence, the abundance of a certain kind of works wherever the influence of this theory prevails.

The fourth is Faith, which is entirely different, and opposed to all these others. It differs from Mysticism in this, that its obedience is intelligent. It knows why it obeys, because it is required by competent authority. Though it may not know the reason of the command, or the connection between the obedience and the blessing, it is sure of the command, and that it regards as sufficient. It regards blind and unintelligent impulses as insufficient to control its regards. It must be certain of the revelation of the truth or duty; that is all it requires. With Superstition it has no fellowship, and claims as little affinity with Fanaticism. It differs from Rationalism in this, that it submits itself as a learner of what revelation is, and does not assume the place of a master, to prescribe what it ought to be. It is diffident till it knows, then it is sure and unconquerable. It differs from the Merit of Works, in that it does no more than is required, and doing what it does, not from a view of its efficacy and meritoriousness, but because it is right and agreeable, and a blessing is graciously promised. The peculiar nature of the one principle is, to depend upon itself; of the other, to depend upon God, not upon itself. Of the one to exalt man and abase God; of the other to abase man and exalt

God. This peculiar nature of faith is illustrated in the narrative before us.

First, In using means without seeing any natural connection between them and the end. How could the blast of a ram's horn prostrate stone walls?

Second, In its perseverance amidst discouragement and reproach.

Third, In the certain though mysterious connection which its exercise, in the use of appointed means, has with the final and glorious result. The wall did not fall by any inherent impulse proceeding from faith, neither are we justified by its merits.



## LECTURE XVIII.

### ARREST OF THE SUN.

"Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel."—JOSHUA 10: 12—14.

It has been objected by infidelity, as we before noticed, against the morality of the Bible, that it authorized the extirpation of the Canaanites; so also it has been objected against the event here recorded, that it is contrary to philosophy. But it should be remembered, that it is impossible to account for any miracle on philosophical principles. Philosophy is a regular classification of the uniform laws of nature, which have been ascertained by accurate observation and experience. A miracle cannot be accounted for by reference to such uniform laws; for, from the nature of the case, it is a departure from those laws, and it is this which makes it a miracle. But, the manner of the description, it is said, according to which the sun and moon were made to stand still, must be contrary to the fact in the case, since, according to the certainly known truths of astronomy, it is not the motion of the sun which occasions the vicissitudes of day and night, but the rotation

of the earth. But to this it may be remarked, that the Scripture generally speaks in popular, and not in scientific language. They describe the things of the natural world, not according to the discoveries of philosophy, but according to appearances and common apprehension. Thus, they speak of the sun rising and setting, of the ends of the earth, of passing from one end of heaven to the other, and this, indeed, is the every day language of men still. Philosophers themselves speak in this way, as well as others. Whether the sun, or the earth, was arrested in its course, the appearance would be the same. And it is the appearance, and not the philosophic fact, which is described. Of the precise mode in which the miracle took place, two solutions have been given, though it may be impossible to determine positively which of them is the true one.

The effect may have been owing to the stopping of the earth's rotary motion. If so, it presents a most sublime display of the power of God. To stop a mass of matter twenty-five thousand miles in circumference, whirling at the rapid rate of one thousand miles an hour, presents an overwhelming view of omnipotence. Without other simultaneous miraculous interpositions equally astonishing, this sudden arrest of the earth in its progress would have produced the most tremendous effects. "The natural consequence of such a sudden check to the earth, would have been by means of the atmosphere, to crush at once all animal and vegetable existence, to level with the ground the most lofty and massive structures, and in fact, to sweep the whole surface of the globe as with the besom of destruction. But, if the miracle

was performed in this way, the same power that effected this, was equally competent to guard against any destructive consequences arising from it.

Another hypothesis is, that the rotary motion of the earth was not stopped ; but that the light of the sun and moon was supernaturally prolonged by the operation of the same laws of refraction and reflection which ordinarily cause the sun to appear above the horizon, when he is really below it. That He who established the laws which regulate the transmission of light, may at this time, so have influenced the medium through which the sun's rays passed, as to render the sun still visible, long after the time when in ordinary circumstances, he would have disappeared. This would have had the same visible effect as the other. As to the mode in which the event was produced, we are not particularly informed ; the fact only is stated as it appeared ; and this is the way things are generally stated in the Scriptures, both natural and spiritual. Thus it is said, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, but *how* he did it, we are not informed. So of the new creation of the soul it is said, "The wind bloweth, where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the spirit." Our ignorance or inability to explain the manner of a fact, is no reason why we should disbelieve the fact itself, provided we have sufficient evidence of its existence. Having, then satisfactory evidence of this wonderful fact, let us proceed to learn some of the important lessons which it was designed the men of that and every succeeding age should learn from it ; and

First, This arrest upon the sun and moon, was

directly calculated to humble the pride of heathen worshipers, and weaken their confidence in their gods. The sun and moon were worshiped by Phenicians, Canaanites, and other nations, under the name of Baal, or Bel, and Astaroth. Baal is the most ancient god of the Canaanites, and perhaps of the East. They offered human sacrifices to him, and erected altars to him, in groves and high places. He is supposed to be the same with the Saturn of Greece and Rome. The sun was adored over all the East, and is the most ancient deity acknowledged among the heathen. These two bodies were regarded as the generative and productive powers of nature. This arrest of them in the heavens, at the command of the captain of the Lord's people, to prolong the light for the destruction of their own worshipers, must have been calculated, in the most striking manner, to convince them, and idolaters generally, that the objects of their adoration were under the control of a higher power, and were utterly useless as helpers in the time of need. Joshua commands, or rather prays. God, who made the sun and the planets, and maintains them in their courses, hears. It is agreeable to his will, he has suggested it to the mind of the petitioner, or so daring, and apparently presumptuous a request, would not have proceeded from a heart so well regulated as that of Joshua. The sun—though such a strange order was never issued to him since the morning he commenced his majestic course in the heavens—as an obedient servant obeys the high command, and continues to pour forth his effulgent and cheering light; the moon stops in her ascent, till the sun would advance to make her approach necessary, to elevate the gloom of night, that it might be seen on which side the



victory lay : with the worshipers of Jehovah, or the worshipers of Baal. Whether God the maker, or the sun and moon, his servants, had the best claim to the homage of man. And the result, as usual, when God interposes, was on the side of his honor. Who, after this, will pay divine honors to these creatures of Jehovah's power? But strange to tell, the question had, after this, to be asked of Joshua's descendants, how long halt ye between two opinions ; if the Lord be God, follow him : if Baal, then follow him. And for this sin, they had to be punished in a heathen land by the worshipers of Bel. So strangely propense to sin is man ; so little does he like to retain the knowledge of God in his thoughts, and so prone to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all blessed forever. But,

Second. It may teach us the immensity of the Divine control, and enlarge our conceptions of Omnipotence, and of a continually superintending Providence. If nature stops in its wonderful course, at the bidding of God, its continuing in its course in that exactness and uniformity which distinguishes it, must be owing to the constant exercise of that power which put it motion. Philosophy herself, teaches us, that *viz inertia*, or the power of no motion, is an essential property of matter. That it will never put itself in motion, or continue in motion any longer than it is operated upon by an external force. Look, then, at the immensity of God's creation. It is too vast, it is true, to be seen by mortal eyes, or be grasped by our limited understanding. This earth on which we live, and which from its nearness to us, is so magnified in our view as to be the principal part of the works of God, is,

in fact, but a speck in creation. It is only a few miles of the surface of this which we have ever seen. We believe it is vastly larger than what we have seen of it, upon the testimony of others—that there is such an empire as China, and a population there, out of which ours would scarcely be missed. We look to the heavens, we see the appearance of innumerable bodies there. Others have assisted their eye-sight, by which they have been magnified a thousand fold, and brought into their neighborhood for inspection. Geometry has lent her aid with its certain calculations. The universe spreads out into greater vastness, by every new accession of strength to the power of vision, and with every advance in the perfection of numbers. Every step in improving the power of intercourse with distant worlds, is rewarded by the evidence of a new world being there. With these facts before him, who would dare to prescribe limits to creation? Or, who could say, that life and intelligence was not there? Who would say, that creation was no larger than could enter into the pupil of his eye, or that he had scanned the workmanship of the Infinite? What mean those eighty millions of twinkling points, at so great a distance from our sun and system, that it would take a cannon ball hundreds of thousands of years to describe the mighty interval which separates between us? That our earth with all its speed, in a direct course to them, since the creation, would not yet have completed the journey. They must be immense bodies, or they could not be seen so far.

They cannot shine to us by light borrowed from our sun. They must be suns themselves, and were we transported to one of these, our earth, which we think so large, would be wholly unseen, and our

sun appear a star. And think you at this remote point, you could draw your pencil and mark the outskirts of creation? Or might not other suns and systems arise to view, still as far remote? And even at the end of this lofty flight be constrained, in view of what is still beyond, to exclaim with Job, "Lo these are parts or lower ends of his ways;" or with another, "Great and miraculous are thy works in wisdom. Hast thou made them all?" In every part of this vast and incomprehensible creation the power of God is present, giving velocity to the whirl of worlds, and guiding the immense, complex mechanism without a failure, in hair-breadth exactness, through thousands of years. What an idea does this give us of the attention of God. We can attend to but one, and that a small thing, at once. When we attempt more, something is neglected. But while the attention of God is managing the weighty concerns of the distant parts of the universe, nothing is neglected elsewhere. And while he is rolling the spheres in their orbits, he is at the same time attending the mean affairs of men, as much as if his whole attention was directed to one single individual—an attention so minute, that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, and numbers the hairs of the head. When we consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars that thou hast made, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Third, This arrest of the planets in their orbits, may teach us not to deify nature in another respect from what the men of the east did. They paid a direct religious veneration to the luminaries of heaven. We are the more prone to pay, not the

homage of an external devotion, but of an inward reliance upon the constancy of nature. Because the regular operations of nature continue their unceasing round of blessings, God becomes excluded from the regards of men. The very constancy of his operations, and his unceasing attentions, become an occasion of excluding God altogether from the contemplation; and the wheels of nature, and providence, are regarded as driven on by a fatal necessity, which is unchangable in its operations, and merits no gratitude for its continuance. This is the theme which the apostle Peter introduces the scoffers of the last day as seizing upon, as a defence against the retributions of justice, While walking in their own lusts, they say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Here this infidelity rested on the basis, that the economy of nature was perpetual and everlasting. In proportion to her past endurance, was the firm confidence in her future perpetuity. To such men, nothing looked more unlikely than the intervention of God with the system of visible things. Every day's continuance of nature as it was, strengthened this confidence, till men, in the spirit of defiance or ridicule, braved the announcement, that the judge will appear to stop the onward current of things, and bring them to judgment. This same infidelity which excludes a God from the throne of judgment, by a little change in its course, excludes God from the throne of providence. The one would expunge from its creed the doctrine of a coming judgment; the other would exclude from it the doctrine of a present and special providence. By one form of thought, it is



presumed that nature will never have a termination; by the other, that nature will not change *now*; and both ideas are imagined from nature's constancy. How strange! how ineffably wicked! that the very constancy of God's care should be made the reason to believe that he exercised no care at all; and his faithfulness in upholding his works, that we should be happy, should become the reason for disbelieving his word—that because he was not swift to execute the threatening, man should from that believe he had no hand in bestowing the good. But this sudden arrest of nature in her grander movements—this bringing in the sun and moon to aid one of the contending parties, for the overthrow of those who had ceased to acknowledge the God of providence, and transferred their homage to the sun, as the highest source of blessings—teaches the whole earth not to deify nature, and exclude from their regards nature's God—that divine control is behind the mighty wheels of providence, moving them at pleasure, and stopping them at his will—that he who could stop the sun once, can do it again, turning him into blood, and cover the moon as with a sackcloth of hair, and roll the heavens together as a scroll.

Fourth, This event may teach the world the efficacy of prayer.

This same experience of the constancy of nature is seized upon, both as a matter of infidel theory, and every day ungodly practice, as an apology for the neglect of prayer. The laws of nature, it is said are fixed—uniform effects flow from like causes. It is weakness to hope to break this connection, or alter the result, by interposing another cause, so unlikely as prayer, to change the result.

Now this case, as a practical instance, presents a matter of historic fact, against this philosophic abstraction. This too, on the grander scale of nature's processes. Joshua prays—a world stops in its mighty revolution. Which check too, must, unless guarded, have thrown confusion, if not destruction, into the whole solar system, if not the universe of worlds: and all this when one man prays. Who then, in view of such facts, will pretend that in his philosophic researches into the arcana of nature, in his ascending process up the chain of causes, he has gone so far as to be certain, that there is no one of the links that may be touched by the finger of God, and control the event, even without producing any such visible changes in the visible causes, as to make it miraculous. Here prayer was answered by a change of the visible phenomena, and therefore miraculous; but who can say that an invisible link may not be touched, and lead to the result as certainly, and not be miraculous? Thus prayer may be answered and nature not appear to be changed.

Fifth, We are taught that there is an intimate connection in the different and distant parts of the material universe; so there is in the intelligent and spiritual. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

Finally, we may infer, that the objects of faith, like those of sight, may be very different from what they appear. To the unaided vision, the earth appears the greatest object in the universe, but dwindles into insignificance as our sight is aided; so it is with faith, with the telescope of truth applied to the spiritual world.

## LECTURE XIX.

### THE CERTAINTY OF THE BELIEVER'S, AND OF THE CHURCH'S TRIUMPH, ILLUSTRATED BY THE OVER- THROW OF THE MIDIANITES BY GIDEON.

"Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.

"And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece; and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."

JUDGES 6: 21, 36—40.

The miracles which God wrought by Moses, notwithstanding the frequent seasons of forgetfulness, made a lasting impression on the minds of that generation which was cotemporary with Moses and Joshua. Thus it is said, "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel." But when Joshua were dead, and "all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he

had done for Israel;" then they did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the gods of the people that were round about them. For this the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and was against them for evil. Though the Lord, because of their oppression, raised up judges which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them, when the judges were dead, they corrupted themselves more than their fathers.

On this occasion, for their sins, they were delivered into the hand of Midian seven years. To escape their ravages, they concealed themselves in dens in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. The increase of the fields was destroyed by them, so that there was no sustenance left. In the extremity of their distress they cried unto the Lord, who sent them a prophet, who assured them that the cause of their distress was the breach of covenant with God, and their disobedience. It is only when an individual, or a community are sensible of their sins, and turn to God for help, with a full sense of their dependence on him, that they may reasonably hope to obtain deliverance. When they cried to the Lord, he not only sent a preacher to them, to deepen their repentance, and bring to their remembrance God's past faithfulness, and wonderful works, but also an angel of the Lord appeared in Ophrah, to the son of Joash, to commission and encourage him to undertake the responsible task of subduing the countless numbers of the enemies of Israel, and leading them forth to a joyful victory. Gideon little expected such a visit, or such a commission; and like Moses, when the Lord would make him the distinguished instrument of effecting the deliverance of Israel from Egypt,



was ready to excuse himself by many apologies. To remove his excuses, the Lord assured him that he would be with him. He asks a miracle to satisfy him, that there was no mistake in the personage with whom he was holding converse. He asks of the angel that he would remain till he brought his present. With this request he complies. A kid is speedily prepared, and unleavened cakes, and, according to the direction of the heavenly visitant, are laid upon a rock. The angel touched them with the end of his staff, and there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed them, and then he vanished as a spirit, perhaps in the flame which he had kindled. By this he was satisfied that it was the angel of the Lord, but was more terrified than comforted by the assurance, until the Lord said, "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." Man, since the apostacy, has ever been afraid of God, and of heavenly messengers. Man in his primeval innocence held delightful intercourse with his Maker; no sooner did he sin, than he hid himself from the approach of him in whose converse he so lately delighted. Ever since God has been feared, even when he comes on errands of mercy. Angels, and even the presence of godly men, are feared and disliked by those whose pleasure it is to sin. When the Son of God came to seek and to save the lost, he was entreated to depart out of their coasts. And when God the Spirit comes to convince and renovate the sinner, his depraved nature says, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. It is only by the assurance of peace, that there can be confidence and fellowship. This consumption of the sacrifice shewed that it was not needed for meat,

but for sacrifice; and it being consumed, signified to Gideon that he had found grace in the sight of the Lord. God usually testified his acceptance of sacrifice, by kindling them with fire from heaven. The acceptance of the sacrifice, was a token of the acceptance of his person, and went to confirm the commission now given him, and afford him every needed assurance of success. The acceptance of the sacrifice preceded the announcement of peace, and the assurance that he would not die; so in our intercourse with God. Sin has broken up all fellowship, and introduced fear and dismay. It is only by the acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ in our behalf, and our interest in it, by presenting it to God by faith, and reliance upon it, instead of our imperfect obedience, that the terror of the conscience ceases, and Jehovah Shallam, The Lord, Peace, as a memorial can be erected.

This miraculous evidence of supernatural presence and power, seems to have satisfied Gideon for the time, of his acceptance, and of his commission; but when called, as he was, immediately to difficult and trying service, he seemed to feel the need of further confirmation of his faith. His responsibility increases with his privileges. If his sacrifice was consumed, it was not only that peace might be spoken to him, and his soul repose in enjoyment; but it was, that the same night he should begin to reform the nation, commencing with his father's house; that he should cut down the grove, taking his father's bullock, and building an altar on this same rock. For this, the men of his tribe arose against him for his destruction. So, no sooner do men begin at the call of God to oppose sin on a great scale, than they have to meet with persecu-

tion, and that, too, often from their kindred and friends. Paul no sooner began to preach the faith which once he destroyed, than he had to flee for his life, and take refuge among the heathen, and find a protection among them, which was refused him among his own people. This trial of faith, this opposition and persecution is, perhaps, unlooked for in the first tranquility of a newly exercised faith; and by these after trials and labors to which it is exposed, many are offended and fail: and the faith of all needs to be strengthened, to bear the burden and overcome the discouragements. We need not only evidence to satisfy us that God has spoken peace to us through the atonement, that God has accepted his sacrifice in our behalf, and that our sins are forgiven; but we need assurance that our depravity shall not overcome us, that our spiritual enemies shall be subdued, and that we shall not one day fall by their hands. With that strength of faith which Gideon had obtained by the first miracle of the presence of God, and of the strength of his promise, he was able to commence and proceed a certain way in the performance of duty. But difficulties increase, the path becomes more thickly beset with thorns, the burden becomes too heavy for his present strength, the Midianites are spread out like grasshoppers, and their camels without number, and the faith which was strong enough once, is too weak for the increased difficulty now; and he asks that the dew may be on the fleece only, and that it may be dry on the earth beside, that he might know that God would save Israel by his hand, as he had said. It might seem to be provoking to God, to ask him to work a miracle, to satisfy us that what he said was true—that

he would fulfill his own voluntary promise; but he condescends to our infirmity, and bears with our weakness. He gives the asked for sign, and Gideon satisfies himself of the fact by wringing out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. Even yet, his faith is not equal to the hazardous undertaking to which he is called, and he tremblingly asks to prove God once more, and that it be dry only upon it, and dew upon all the ground beside. This also was granted, and was more strange than the other, as it is natural for wool to absorb whatever moisture there may be in the air about it. This was in direct contravention of the ordinary laws of nature; so willing is God to give to the heirs of promise strong consolation, even by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie. He suffers himself not only to be prevailed with by their importunities, but to be prescribed to by their doubts and dissatisfactions. The reason why many fail, when more difficulties are to be performed, or more severe trials to be encountered is, that they rely upon the strength or grace they have, and do not look for more. But if God calls us to more difficult service, he calls us also to rely upon him for strength to do it. The grace of the promise is always equal to the duty of the command; so that we are always without excuse for disobedience. But God sometimes, by his command, and often by his providence, seems to throw embarrassments in the way of results toward which he directs us, and for the accomplishment of which we may be using the means with a good degree of faithfulness; so that our faith, after it has been strengthened once and again, may be too weak to overcome the discouragements which God himself seems to occasion.



Gideon's courage seemed to be equal to the enterprise, after his faith had been thrice invigorated by miracles, while he marched at the head of thirty-two thousand volunteers against his numerous enemy; but when God, by a special arrangement, reduced his forces to three hundred men, his fears again prevailed. So hard is it to rely upon faith, when it is opposed by the evidence of sense. We may not suspect the weakness of our faith until all other sources of confidence are removed; then, like Peter, with no other foundation under our feet than the yielding waves and a simple confidence in the promise of God, we feel disposed to stop in our progress, and say, "Save Lord, I perish." It is faith, in its unusual exercises, that admits of no doubt—when all visible appearances are against the fulfillment of the promise. It is such faith only as that of Abraham, that hopes against hope—that in the midst of every earthly discouragement is strong, giving glory to God. The Lord had said, "With these three hundred will I deliver them as one man into thy hand." But reason and experience say, What are three hundred to contend with a multitude, spread out upon the valley as grasshoppers, and camels as the sand of the sea. But providence comes to the aid of miracle, to remove this suspense. A dream disturbs the repose of a Midianitish soldier, and is told to his fellow at the very moment when Gideon was near enough to hear it and its interpretation. And while it represented him and his forces as no more than the rolling of a barley cake among the tents of the enemy; yet it strangely overturned them. This dissipates his remaining doubts, and he commences the attack with no other weapons than trumpets

and torches, with their light concealed in earthen pitchers. Surely, sense and reason can have nothing to do in assailing an enemy with such a preparation. It is not without reason that Gideon is placed by the apostle in the catalogue of those, "Who by faith subdued kingdoms, and wrought righteousness, and obtained a good report."

While the best laid schemes of mere human policy are often overturned, faith always conquers. She hath won a thousand victories, and has never known a defeat. And whenever you ask in view of a failure in doing what God requires, Why could we not do it? the answer will be as it was to the disciples, "Because of your unbelief." Faith is as unconquerable as omnipotence, on which it rests. It "overcomes the world"—It "conquers earth and hell by a celestial power"—It "waxes valiant in fight, and puts to flight the armies of the aliens, quenches the violence of fire, and stops the mouths of lions." Gideon goes with the force and the arms which God directs, relying upon the promise. They shout "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon"—they break the vessels, and three hundred torchlights illuminate the midnight darkness, and as many trumpets break the silence of night. The enemy conclude, that if there be so many torch-bearers, and so many trumpeters, the whole host must be immense. They are thrown into confusion, become each others executioners, and flee in dismay. So easy is it for God to conquer, by many or by few; so weak is the most formidable enemy when God is against them; and so sure is success on the side of faith and obedience.

Let us review the particulars of this description, to contemplate the agencies and influences upon

which individual believers, and the universal church may rely for a final victory.

The first thing that arrested the attention of Gideon, was the appearance of the angel under the oak at Ophrah. This angel was no doubt the Son of God himself, who often appeared in human form to the patriarchs. By this he gave intimation of his future incarnation. This is he of whom Malachi, in the close of the Old Testament prediction, speaks, giving assurance to the church, that the angel of the covenant, whom they delighted in, should suddenly appear in his temple. He is called the Lord, or Jehovah, in this narrative, which title cannot apply to a created angel. This angel then, which appeared to Gideon, and by miraculous fire from the rock consumed the sacrifice, and thus proved to him his divinity, has since appeared in real humanity, and offered himself a sacrifice, without spot, to God, and thereby purchased the church with his own blood, and proved himself to be the Son of God with power, by many miracles, and his resurrection from the dead. He gave himself not only to us, as he appeared to Gideon to confirm his faith in his word, but for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Having made his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Being now exalted, every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue shall confess to God. By the cross he laid a sure foundation for victory.

Second, Gideon was qualified for his work, by being endowed with the gifts and graces of the Spirit. As it is said, the Spirit of the Lord came

upon him, or clothed him, giving him in all those qualifications necessary for his arduous undertaking. In a similar way, and by the same Spirit, the apostles were indued with power from on high, at Jerusalem.

This qualification for carrying forward the work of the Lord, is more generally and more abundantly furnished now. 'This promise of the Father has been fully granted, and we live under the dispensation of the Spirit. In bestowing this, God is as the dew unto Israel, and moistens the dry fleece of the soul, "pours water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." By this, the christian mortifies the deeds of the body, and "the world is reprov'd of sin, of righteousness and judgment;" by this, the leaders of the Lord's host are furnished with official gifts, and the renovated tribes go on to further conquest.

Third, A prophet or minister was sent unto them, to teach them their duty, their relation to their covenant God, and bring them to repentance for their sins. And this was the Savior's ascension gift to us, Some pastors and teachers for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come to the measure of the fullness of Christ. It has pleased God to put "the treasure in these earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God." By the light which they have shed, confusion has been spread into the ranks of God's enemies, and the Gospel has been the power of God unto salvation.

Fourth, There is put into our hands the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit and trumpet of the Gospel; and every soldier of the cross is required to let his light shine, to hold forth the



word of life, to blow the trumpet, and shout "the sword of the Lord and Gideon." These are our resources, and the field of conquest is the whole range of depravity in every individual heart within you, and the world of unconverted mankind without. The field is the world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Ye are the salt of the earth."

The encouragements are, that God is on the side of holiness and truth. Though in view of the strength of depravity within you, and its firm establishment without, and the many false-hearted under the banner of the captain of salvation, you may fear that the cause for which you are enlisted is no more than a barley cake to that which opposes it, it will at length prevail; and if true and faithful, you will shout salvation on the hills of light, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

## LECTURE XX.

### THE CHARACTER AND MIRACLES OF SAMSON.

"And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshataol."—JUDGES 13: 24, 25.

"And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day."—15: 18, 19.

"And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: so that the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."—16: 28—30.

The Hebrew commonwealth, according to the institutions of Moses, partook very much of the nature of a Republic, and the judges from the time of Joshua to Saul, their first king, were the chief magistrates of the whole nation, or of particular states or tribes. Their power was a medium between that of a king and an ordinary magistrate. Their office generally lasted for life, but their succession was not always continued. They lived sometimes under the dominion of strangers, without government of their own. They were usually

designated by God, by special appointments, or from the gifts with which they were invested, or the exploits they were enabled to perform, were chosen by the people, to deliver them from their oppressors. By their office they were the protectors of the law, the defenders of religion, and the avengers of all crimes, especially idolatry. Fickleness, to a great extent, seemed to mark their national character. By their continual proneness to sin, they exposed themselves to the ravages of their enemies, and the loss of their liberties, and remained in this condition until another chief Magistrate was raised up, with superior qualifications, to deliver them. Their history shews us, that the best form of government, and the most wholesome laws will not secure national prosperity without proper education, and moral and religious principle generally diffused throughout the mass of the people. We boast of our civil institutions, and seem to feel as if they could preserve us in defiance of our follies and sins, but we may learn, when it is too late, that knowledge, and moral and religious principle are the stable foundations of a prosperous government, and that a wise and equitable constitution will not save us under the sway of an ignorant and infidel majority, and ungodly administrators.

At the time Samson came to the administration of public affairs, the nation had been under the oppression of the Philistines forty years. He was a man, every way, of an extraordinary character. In his birth, in his life, and in his death, he was distinguished by peculiarities. His birth was predicted by a visit of an angel to his parents. Having received so great and unexpected a gift, in the

exercise of their grateful and pious feelings, they dedicated him to God, as a perpetual Nazarite for life. A Nazarite, under the ancient law, was a person engaged by a vow, to abstain from all intoxicating liquors, to let his hair grow, and not approach the dead. This vow generally lasted eight days, sometimes a month, and sometimes during their lives. At the expiration of the time certain prescribed sacrifices and libations were offered, and the person was freed from the obligation. Perpetual Nazarites, as Samson and John the baptist, were consecrated by their parents, and continued all their lives in this state.

Manoah and his wife showed their gratitude, and left a memorial of their piety, by devoting their first born and only son to God, in the public service of the church and the state, and gave him such an education, doubtless, as was calculated to fit him for the station which he was designed to fill. God has often accepted such offerings at the hand of parents, and prepared them by his grace for his service, and his providence opened for them extensive fields of usefulness in which to employ their talents and acquirements, for the good of man and the glory of God.

What better, or more becoming can you do with the best gift that heaven has bestowed upon you, than to dedicate it to God, from whom you have received it? God, under the original arrangement of the Israelites, when he slew the first born of Egypt, claimed the first born son of every family to be devoted to the priesthood. This arrangement was afterwards changed, so as to take a whole tribe in its place. By this God teaches the world that his claim is first in order, and first in



importance. It is an inquiry which every pious parent should honestly make in reference to his son, In what business or occupation is it the Lord's will that he should serve him? In what way can he in the best manner glorify God, and serve his generation? And this question is not to be decided by ascertaining the most profitable pursuit, or that which will be the most productive of ease, or pleasure, or honor. How few parents honestly put the question to themselves, whether God has a claim on them, to devote their sons to the service of the church, or their daughters to teach the heathen the word of God and the way of salvation. Most feel that their children are born to serve in the ordinary routine of this world's business, as a matter of course, without once seriously inquiring whether the Lord has need of them in some other less frequented service, or thinking of educating them in such a way as would fit them for a wider scope of usefulness. If mankind would be prepared for extensive usefulness in any pursuit, they must be impressed with its importance in their infancy, and trained to it in their youth. If there was no more care taken to impress the youthful mind, and train it to the business of agriculture and domestic economy, than there is usually to impress it with the importance of personal engagement, and self-denial, and consecration in the service of God, to carry forward the great interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, soon there would be few persons skilled in such business, or inclined to submit to its ever-recurring toil, and civilized society would soon sink into a barbarous state. If the last and best of all the judges of Israel is to be furnished, it is by being devoted to the Lord before he is born, and lent to the Lord afterwards as long

as he lived. If the chief minister of the Gentiles is to turn the heathen from the error of their ways, it is by the Lord controlling the talents and the education which he had perfected by the direction and expense of his parents, at the schools of Tarsus and Jerusalem. If Timothy is the first of the evangelists, it is because his mother, and his grandmother, taught him the Scriptures from a child, which, by faith in Christ, made him wise unto salvation. If Moses is to be the deliverer of his afflicted brethren from an oppressive tyranny, their future law-giver, and most distinguished prophet, it is because God has taken an education given for another purpose, and sanctified it to himself. And, if Israel is to be delivered from forty years oppression of the Philistines, the way is to be prepared for it by the devotion of Samson, by his parents, to be a perpetual Nazarite. And how knowest thou, to whom God has given children, that by consecrating them as you ought, and educating them as you ought, you may not be preparing one like Moses, to conduct his brethren to the land of promise; like Samson, to put forth his strength to rescue his captivated countrymen; like Samuel, to judge his people; or, like Paul, to carry the Gospel far hence among the Gentiles? Certain it is, that if you do not your part, you have no reason to expect God to do what is appropriately his, and yours also.

With more than a million and a half of children on the school list in the United States, enjoying not even the advantages of a common school, with more than one hundred and thirty-five thousand annually passing by age out of the school list, who can neither read nor write, to be the fathers and mothers of our future citizens, already a mass of

uneducated ignorance sufficient to turn the balance of power in the election of the chief officers of the government, and which it is continually the interest of a heated party policy to enlist on its side. If you add to this the great and increasing dereliction of moral principle in the community, the painful manifestation of it often by public functionaries high in power, together with the uneducated, and often unprincipled hordes which are annually flocking into these States, from the worst classes of Europe, many of them the sworn subjects of the despot at Rome, who can never throw off their allegiance there, without throwing off their religion; when, I say, you take but a slight view of things as they exist in this hitherto favored land, is there not reason to fear, and motives enough this side of the considerations of a future and heavenly nature, to induce every parent to prepare his offspring to act their part well in the future history of his country.

But, how encouraging is it, and how certain is a favorable result, when God himself interposed by his special grace, and his extraordinary gifts, to qualify the young for stations of influence and public usefulness. When he gives evidence that he is favoring the benevolent desires of the pious parent, and accepting the consecration at his hands. When it can be said, as it is here said of Samson, "The child grew and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him."

How enouraging is the prospect of a useful manhood and a fruitful old age, when the childhood and youth are blessed with distinguishing grace and peculiar gifts. When, like the Savior, he

grows in favor, both with God and man. When, with the growing strength of body, there is a corresponding growth of mind, and with the expansion of the intellect, there is an equal filling it with useful knowledge; and when with the increase of knowledge there is an equal improvement of the moral feelings, and thus the vigor of youth come under the control of a renovated heart. When the youthful exploits are not feats of mischief, which show how much society have to fear from them, when they acquire the strength and influence of manhood, but such as give hopeful promise of blessing to mankind with their growing ability.

It is not unusual for young men to attempt useless displays of bodily strength, and to pride themselves in their intellectual vigor, if they are able to surpass their rivals; but it is only when strength is directed to useful ends, that its exercise is praiseworthy, and this will be done toward the most worthy objects only when it is influenced by the Spirit of God.

The youthful strength and courage of Samson were fired with a becoming zeal for the deliverance of the church of his ancestors, from an idolatrous influence, and burned with a proper indignation in view of the oppressions which his countrymen suffered; and he gave early indications of something great to be expected from him, when all his powers would be fully matured. These youthful feats, which he performed in the camp of Dan, were pre-sages of what his manhood would be among the hosts of the Philistines. He himself was to be a host against the enemies of God and true religion. He was to fight the battles for Israel single handed; and for his personal strength and prowess was to



be the most remarkable of the human race. So that his is only another name for strength where Bible story is known, and in Greek and Roman fable, Hercules answers to him, and shews how much heathen literature has corrupted the narratives of the Bible, and how much their poets are dependent for their sublime allusions to hints from the truths of Scripture. But in reviewing the achievements of distinguished men, either in the church or state, we are liable to overlook the peculiar agency of God in preparing the instruments, and working by them, to produce the results at which we wonder. Every child is interested in the story of Samson, and amazed at his strength. The strength which he shewed is conceived to be his, as every other man's is. The answer to the question, which is learned in the nursery, "Who was the strongest man," contributes to this idea. This notion of childhood, that the strength of Samson resided in his own nerves and muscles, is often, perhaps, [not removed by years. This is, however, plainly against the evidence of the narrative. His natural strength was probably no more than that of other men. The power by which he did those wonderful things, is directly attributed to God, and recorded as being obtained on certain occasions by prayer, and that which was the case once, was probably the case in every instance. The first evidence of his youthful power is attributed to the Spirit of the Lord. And when he rent the lion, as he would have rent a kid, it was because the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, by which his powers were raised to an unwonted pitch of energy. When he went down to Askelon, and slew thirty men of them, it is said the Spirit of the

Lord came upon him. And again, when the Philistines shouted against him, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords on his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and then with a jaw bone he slew a thousand men. When he was athirst, he prayed, and the Lord opened a fountain in Lehi. When he took hold of the pillars of Dagon's temple, he did the same. It was the same Spirit which wrought the miracles of the New Testament, that wrought these. Samson was the instrument only, as the apostles were when they said to the cripple, "arise and walk." From which we may learn, that the Spirit was in the Old, as well as in the New Testament church, both in his miraculous and sanctifying influences.

As the strength of Samson was lost when he lost his hair, and was restored with the regaining of the same, it may seem to some, that it was the source of his strength. But the true idea seems to be, that his extraordinary power was connected with his preserving his vow of Nazariteship, of which the loss of it was a proof of violation. And with his returning hair, and returning repentance, God again showed his approbation of him, by working a miracle by him, and overthrowing thousands of Dagon's worshipers.

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#### REMARKS.

First, In looking at the history of this extraordinary man, the inquiry may occur to some, why an individual of so many irregularities, and inconsistencies, should have been made the instrument of so much miraculous agency. To this we reply, gifts and graces are two things, not always united. Many will say to him in that day, "Have

we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?" To whom he will say, "I never knew you." But with all the irregularities of Samson's life, it seems necessary to believe on the authority of the apostle Paul, (Heb. 11,) that he was the subject of saving faith; and if so, must have repented and been forgiven.

Second, From this view of his character an objection may arise against the reality of religion itself. But instead of this, it should be improved rather as a proof of the dreadful depravity of human nature; that is capable of grievous sin in spite of the distinguished gifts bestowed upon it, and in opposition even to the grace received. And it should teach us to enlarge the circle of our christian charity, and not condemn professed brethren, without mercy, for one sin, unless we have certain evidence of continued impenitence. A christian of large experience once said, If I get to heaven, I shall be disappointed in two respects—In not seeing some there that I expect, and in seeing some there I did not expect.

Third, This narrative may be abused by some backsliding professor, to indulge in sin. But let such remember the loss of Samson's strength, his turning the mill stones in the prison, the loss of his eyes, and his being the object of the ridicule of thousands of the ungodly, and the certain forfeiture of the favor of God, till he returns by a bitter repentance.

Fourth, Let sinners remember that no revelry upon the faults of christians will secure them. These thousands made merry with Samson, and plunged into hell.

## LECTURE XXI.

### RAIN WITHHELD.—ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW PROVIDED FOR.

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went, and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening: and he drank of the brook.”

1 KINGS 17: 1—6.

In the reign of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel reached the zenith of its power. Then they obtained the full possession of their inheritance, and according to the word of the Lord to Abraham, they possessed the gates of their enemies. But it is true of nations, as of individuals, that their prosperity destroys them. Man in honor abideth not.

In the days of that distinguished prince, the glory to which the nation had been exalted began to be clouded. Like the sun, it no sooner arose to the meridian than it begun to decline, and the darkness of night succeeded. The first moving cause to this, was the defection of Solomon himself. By foreign influence he was led astray from the pure worship of Jehovah, and went after the idols of the nations. This sowed the seeds of future calamity. Sin when it is finished bringeth



forth death. Such is the close connection between rulers and their subjects, that if they depart from the law of the Lord, the people are influenced by their example, and suffer the consequences of their sins. In the days of his son and successor, ten parts of the nation revolted, and made Jeroboam their king. Thus, according to the threatening, the kingdom was rent and given to his servant. No sooner was he exalted to power, than influenced by a party policy, he contrived to keep his subjects from the influence of the tribe of Judah, the teaching of the priesthood, and the influence of the solemn festivals of Jerusalem. He provided two golden calves, as objects of worship, to Israel. This, which perhaps was intended at first as no more than a political expedient, to secure the strength and stability of his kingdom, proved the occasion of corrupting, and at last of utterly destroying it. Under a succession of base and wicked princes, and in spite of frequent and solemn warnings of the prophets, they became more and more corrupt, till they were carried away captive, and placed in different parts of the Assyrian empire.

Among the worst of these princes, rolling on the tide of corruption to this memorable disaster, was Ahab, who sold himself to work iniquity. As the fountain of this evil was opened in the time of Solomon, by the influence of foreign women becoming the wives of Judah's king; so the torrent rose to its height by the influence of Jezebel, the daughter of an idolatrous king. Female influence, retiring and unostentatious as it is, deformed the fair kingdom of Israel, and covered it with the sable mantle of mourning, as it spoiled the bowers

of Eden at first, and expelled its happy occupants into a world of misery.

That people are still wanting important grounds for their public security and general happiness, though their garners may be full, affording all manner of store; though their sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets, unless their sons be as plants grown up in their youth, and their daughters also as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. "Happy is that people that is in such a case. Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." But, if individuals or nations will corrupt themselves, and depart farther from God, he does not usually leave them to pursue their downward course to ruin, without throwing obstructions in the way of sin, and by his providence, or by his word, warning them of the fatal termination of their course. In the worst of times God has raised up faithful witnesses to testify to his truth, and warn even those high in authority, that there is a God who is higher than they, and will bring upon them the judgments they deserve. The best of men have been raised up in the worst of times. Thus the care of God for his church has been manifested, the cause of the Redeemer has been preserved, and has triumphed, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it. Such was the time Elijah ministered. Such the extraordinary character of that intrepid prophet. Almost every thing that is said of him, is out of the ordinary course. He is presented to notice without introduction. So far as record of his connection is concerned, he is like Melchizedek without father or mother. The first that is seen of him, he breaks the quiet of Ahab's (Israel's) apostacy,

like the thunder from the overhanging cloud of vengeance; or like the earthquake, to make them fear the opening gulf beneath them. "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." He speaks as if heaven and earth were under his control—as if he had power to shut heaven in the days of his testimony.

The Chinese religion makes pretension to support from its many miracles; but they are always reported as being performed in some remote region, where those whose faith is demanded in them has no opportunity of testing their truth. Roman Catholics pretend to continued miracles, to procure the reverence of the ignorant for their false doctrines and deceitful practices; but they are not submitted to the examination of the multitude. But who in Israel could not know whether the rain or the dew fell for three years and a half? or who of them would not know whether the record of such a fact was true? Who under the garb of a reprover for sin, would speak in a style so presumptuous, unless under the influence of Him who holds the waters as in the hollow of his hand? Or how could such an event come to pass, unless He whom all nature obeys, co-operates with the prediction, or the prayer of a man? And God would not interpose to seal up the waters of the firmament, unless some bold infraction had been made upon the laws of his moral government, and some extraordinary expedient was necessary to reform the guilty, or punish them for their sins, as a warning to others. The laws of the material world have often been made to stand in suspense, or abandon their established order, for the sake of establishing the order of the moral kingdom, which had

been broken contrary to command. Thus, inanimate nature, always abiding by its maker's orders, whether to continue or change, becomes not only a reprover to man, its intelligent observer, but also a powerful agent at the bidding of Providence, to punish him for being less obedient than itself. Thus God calls, "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." At the mouth of these two witnesses man's condemnation will be established, and especially those who have been dignified with the title of his children, and have dishonored the privileged relation.

So long as things progress according to the prescribed order in the moral kingdom, there is no violation of the established and harmonious action of the material kingdom. All the rupture and derangement apparent in the natural laws of being, were preceded by a moral derangement, and are to be accounted for by it. Were it not for this, all nature would still present a delightful harmony, and each of its movements be productive of happiness only to man, its moral overseer. But, because he has been in the fault, who ought of all nature to have been the brightest example of rectitude to his Maker's laws, the heavens curse the earth, and the earth curses him. The sun scorches him by day, and the moon blasts him by night. He inhales disease by his breath, drinks it in the water, and eats it with his food. The heavens over him become as brass, and the earth as iron, that between the scorching sides of this capacious furnace he may be melted into repentance; or if dying in the process without amendment, may be forced



into an abode where moral order is no more, and where every natural law is so distorted from its original use, as to be painted with poison, and armed with pain, in an unaleviated and endless succession of miseries.

As an effort to restore to order the moral system which man had so greatly deranged, God introduced a system of extraordinary means with the descendants of Abraham. He commenced the displays of his power in their behalf, in the bosom of the most powerful of the nations, and made the visible phenomena of nature yield to the accomplishment of his purpose, in such public circumstances, that the world had to be the spectators, or the hearers of the report. Having thus brought forth a people singularized by miraculous agency, and impressed upon imperishable tablets the obliterated moral code, and by a series of judgments and mercies, made it as indelible upon their minds as upon stone, having placed them in the centre of the nations, and hedged them in by laws, to preserve them from the sinful practices of their neighbors, and keep unsullied the sacred deposit committed to their trust, the laws of nature are not now interrupted, miraculous agency is not called into exercise, and for two centuries and a half the experiment is made with the moral law in the statute book, in the ark of the covenant, and on the lips of the priesthood, impressed by the sacrifices of the altar, to see how faithfully they would exemplify it. But, alas! for man! He always proves faithful to the depravity of his nature, so that law, and privilege, and instruction, and chastisement, are insufficient barriers to restrain his propensity to wrong, and confine him within the limits of duty. And now the

abominations of the heathen are introduced into the fair heritage, which had been conquered by miracle. The calves of Dan, and Bethel, like the object of the worship of the Egyptian task-masters, are become the object of the religious respect of ten parts of the liberated and heaven-distinguished people. A schism has taken place among the compacted sons of Jacob. Ephraim is vexing Judah, and Judah Ephraim. The worst of men, and a queen of heathen parentage and idolatrous education, sway the septre over ten tribes of the covenant people: while priests not of the consecrated tribe, not buds of Aaron's rod, but of the lowest of the people, serve at the altar. Now there is need for a reformer in the land of vines and fig trees, as there was for a law-giver in the wilderness. Again there is need of miracles to reform from a habit of sin, as there was then to commence a habit of duty; and Elijah must confront the votaries of Baal, as Moses had to confound the magicians of Egypt, and Jehovah has again to put forth miraculous agency upon the air, the clouds, the earth, the waters, the grass of the fields, the fowls, the meal, the oil, the soul of the departed, to authenticate the commission of the reformer, as of the law-giver, and convince an apostate people, that He, who was the God of their fathers, and not the sun, was the living God, and their God. O, man! who can portray thy depravity? who can describe thy sinfulness? It is seen in crimson hues in the blood of thy Savior. Its offensiveness is imagined in the fires of eternity. Let backsliders consider their ways and turn to the Lord. Let sinners tremble and seek pardon. The word of the prophet has gone forth. His prayer is

made. It is the effectual, fervent prayer, which availeth much. The firmament feels the influence, the clouds disperse, the sun pours down his arid rays upon the parched earth, the night withholds its moisture, and the powers of a haughty monarch are useless to turn back the sentence. None of the vanities of the Gentiles can give rain. To prevent application to him who is the instrument in bringing on the calamity, he is taken out of the way, and ordered into seclusion, that the curse, unmitigated, may fall upon the devoted land. Wretched indeed is the condition of that individual, or community, that will not seek God, and from whom the godly are taken away and forbidden to intercede. But he who subjects himself to want and persecution, by doing the will of the Lord, will not be forsaken by his God. The birds of prey will supply what is withheld by an ungrateful people. It may not be the luxuries of Ahab's table, but the necessities of life—the bread and water will be sure.

The fear of privation, and loss, is often made an excuse for the neglect of duty. But they that trust in the Lord shall not want any good thing. "Trust in the Lord, and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." When one resource fails, another will be supplied; when the brook Cherith dries up, the widow's oil, and barrel of meal will be multiplied. If natural means fail, miracles are inexhaustible, when God undertakes to punish his enemies, or favor his servants. The house of a poor and heathen widow, becomes the home of the prophet of whom Israel was not worthy. Gentile hospitality supports him whose service Jewish avarice was unwilling to reward. They shall come from the

east and the west, while the children of the kingdom are cast out. There are last which shall be first, and the first last. The presence of the man of God blesses the house of an obscure Zidonian, while neither rain nor dew falls upon the dwelling places of Israel's nobles. The meal is here increased according to the demand, without labor, as bountifully as it would be matured by vegetable growth and fruitful showers. Disease and death, the effects of famine are allowed to go on in the families of Israel, without the consoling voice of the man of God to comfort the afflicted, while here death is arrested after he has done his work, and the prey taken out of his hand and restored to healthful life. "He that giveth a cup of water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward." How sovereign is God in the bestowment of his gifts. Many widows, says Christ, were in Israel in the time of Elias, but to none of them was he sent; but he was sent to Serephta, to one of another nation. Yet, his sovereign favors are often connected with dispositions in the receivers, which show the propriety of the gifts. Perhaps there was no one in all Israel, who would have given the prophet the first portion of a cake already too scanty, and the last to be expected before death by starvation. "He that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. The liberal soul shall be made fat. There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." To him that hath shall be given, when he make a charitable use of what he hath; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have. Had this widow learned the improved style of modern selfishness, she



would, with apparently the best reason, have said, "Charity begins at home. When I and my son have eaten sufficiently, and there is more than we need, I will give thee; but to give away first what is too little, is too much even for charity to expect. But she had not learned so easily to say, "*can't*," when "*wont*" was meant. She did what she could, with the little she had; and it increased not before, but after she began to distribute, and failed not till the Lord sent rain upon the earth. She supported the prophet two years, by her own contributions, and had more at the end of the period than at the beginning, besides the company of this man of God, and the restoration to life of her only son. Imitate this example and thou too shalt be blessed.

In reviewing the narrative of this case, you may find evidences with which to compare yourself, and ascertain your piety. Elijah's piety sustained him amid general degeneracy. It made him a bold reprover of sin. It made him deny himself, and trust Providence for the provisions of to-morrow, that he might do the Lord's will. It made him cease his ministry among the people, whose good he earnestly sought. It made him a man of prayer; and it made him prevalent with God, and mighty among men.

Second, You may see the sin and danger of departing from your covenant engagements with God.

Third, The influence of prayer.

Fourth, The young are here reminded of death.

Fifth, That there is a resurrection. Of this truth, this widow's son is the first pledge.

## LECTURE XXII.

### BAAL'S WORSHIPERS CONFOUNDED.—INDECISION REBUKED.

"Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stone, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."—1 KINGS 18: 38, 39.

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."  
*Ib.* 21.

No people could be more strictly guarded by laws, than the Jewish nation were against idolatry. The person guilty of this offence, subjected himself to the punishment of death. The nearest relations were required to become informers upon each other, and have the guilty put to death. The husband was not to conceal the wife, nor the father the child; neither were they to spare them. But laws will not be executed beyond the integrity of the people. They become a dead letter in the statute book, just in proportion as corruption of principle and general immorality prevail. It was foreseen by Moses, that false prophets would arise, and that vigorous efforts would be used to seduce the heart of the people from the pure worship of the one God. He therefore warned them not to hearken to them, though they supported their pretensions by miracles. If the sign or wonder came to pass, which was to prove the propriety of worshiping other gods, they were not to regard it, but consider that it was a deception practiced upon them, and per-

mitted as a trial of them, whether they would love the Lord with all their heart, and soul. (Deut. 13.)

There are certain principles of religion so firmly established, and supported by such conclusive evidence, that we should rather believe that a miracle wrought to contradict them was a deception, than that they were untrue. The truth of certain things may be so firmly established, that no evidence can invalidate it. If a miracle were wrought to convince you, that by the light of the sun you did not perceive the beauty of the colors before you, it would be no reason why you should disbelieve what you saw. If what pretended to be a miracle were wrought to prove that there never was such a person in these states as General Washington, you would still be bound to believe the fact. No well attested miracle, however, has ever been performed to weaken the evidence of a well established truth. There are certain fundamental truths of natural religion, which commend themselves to the conscience and reason of mankind. The first of these is, that there is a God, and that he should be served. In proof of his existence and providence, miracles were first wrought. Had they been performed to prove that there was no God, or that there were many gods, it would have been doing violence to reason; for she naturally inquires for a first and adequate cause for all things, and having found one such, it is contrary to her decisions to admit any more. In this trial of the false prophets with Elijah, an effort was made, by a miracle, to disprove this fundamental truth of all true religion, that Jehovah is the one only, living and true God. Had they succeeded so far, that the spectators could not

have detected the deception, still, according to the decision of Moses, they would have been bound to believe this truth; and if there was really no deception, and a miracle had truly been performed, we should rather believe that it was performed by the power of the devil, by the permission of God, than to believe that it established the power of idol gods, or that they had a claim on our devotion. But they did not succeed, so that our faith is not put to this trial.

It is remarkable, how often God has graciously condescended to demonstrate his existence to the faith of an unbelieving world. Baal, the god of the heathen, had got visible possession of the land of Israel, and the hearts of the descendants of the father of the faithful. The priests scattered through the ten tribes being brought into disrepute, by the prevalence of idolatry, rather than retain their office and possessions, by conforming to the false religion, had voluntarily forsaken them, and taken up their residence in the tribe of Judah. The ordinary prophets are put to death at the instigation of Jezebel, or, are concealed, and supported by Obediah. Elijah is in retirement in the house of the widow of Zerephath. The prophets of Baal, and of the groves, are multiplied, and supported by royal favor. Nothing from the old established institutions of religion opposes any obstacle to the extension of the false faith, and the sway of the new religion; yet, God has not renounced his relation, and given up his claim to this portion of his apostatized inheritance. Obediah, who greatly feared the Lord from his youth, is at court; the true prophets who survived are ready to come from their concealment, when an opportunity is



afforded; Elijah is waiting the heavenly order, to come from his retreat, and thunder in the ears of the tyrant; providence is at work in the kingdom of nature, though the accredited ministers of the Lord are banished from the altar; the heavens refuse to drop down fatness upon a land whose inhabitants offer praise to an idol; the water refuses to give drink to assuage the thirst of beasts and men; and the pressure of want reaches even to the royal residence, and Ahab himself is forced into a search for the running stream, and for Elijah, the object of his hatred. The godly, those supposed troublers of the wicked in their prosperity, are often sought for in distress, when all earthly resources fail besides; but even then, it is often that the distress may be removed, rather than that they may see their sin, which is the cause of their suffering, and repent and forsake it. Elijah, however, embraces the opportunity to confound the idol, and put to confusion his worshipers. The trial succeeds, and according to the admission of the false worshipers, "Jehovah is confessed to be the only God, and the prophets of the false God, according to the law, are put to death. So triumphant is truth, when fairly brought to the test with error; so manifest the demonstration of the attributes of Jehovah, when brought in competition with the gods of the heathen; and, so manifest the difference between true and false religion—the religion of God, and the religion of man. The contest between these two religions, has been coeval with the history of the world, and run parallel with the generations of men. We see its early manifestations in the family of Adam. God prescribed one religion; man another. Cain brought of the first fruits

of the ground; this was man's religion. Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock; this was the religion of God. The one relied upon his own device; the other upon the wisdom of God. The one depended upon the merit of his works; the other upon the blood of atonement. The one was accepted; the other not. The earliest general manifestation of the religion of man, was paganism. This has numbered more votaries, in the history of this world's depravity, than any other, and is now the most numerous. Its common manifestation is idolatry. The vulgar belief of this system supposes an indefinite number of gods, ascribes to them characters most unworthy of a deity, such as theft, murder, adultery, and all manner of crimes. This theology, as most improved by the ancient philosophers, supposed that there was but one supreme god, (which they commonly make to be the sun, or at least an emblem of him,) out at too great a distance to mind the affairs of the world, therefore, they devised certain demons, which they considered as mediators between the supreme god and man. The worship of this idolatry, by the writer of Israel's apostacy, is called a sacrificing unto devils, and is included in Paul's allusion, speaking of some who give heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. Thus, Satan has had not only more of the service of the men of this world than God, but also more of their religious devotion. How wonderful, as well as humiliating, is this fact. Especially does this appear strange, when it is considered that this form of man's religion imposes upon its adherents more self-torture, more expense, labor, self-denial, and sacrifice every way, except in the forsaking of sin, than the religion of God

does. It demands, and receives, not only the time, the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, to adorn its temples, and smoke upon its altars, but human life itself groans and expires beneath its ponderous wheels, or agonizes upon its funeral piles. Yet, these voracious divinities never sympathize with suffering humanity, or are satisfied with blood. How different the religion of man from the religion of God!!

Another form of man's religion was proposed to the world by Mahomet. This was not like the other. It was not a system of many gods. It was not idolatry. Its fundamental article was, there is but one god, and Mahomet is his prophet. The revelation which he pretended to give to the world was the last, and of the highest authority. It forced itself upon the attention of men by the sword, for it did not pretend to impress conviction by miracles. It acquired an ascendancy over a great mass of the human mind, and has continued its influence twelve hundred years, and still prevails in Persia, in Turkey, and in a considerable portion of Africa.

Another of the manifestations of man's religion, in modern times, is in the form of Deism, or Infidelity. It professes to believe that there is a God, but denies that he has ever given an oral or written revelation of his will. It rejects Paganism, and places Mahomet and Christ on a level, so far as authority to bind the conscience is concerned. It takes the light of nature to teach a system of truth and duty. The sacrifice of the Pagan, and that of Christ, it regards as alike unnecessary and unavailable. It puts itself before God on the original ground of law, and treats with God for eternity

without an atonement, and without an intercessor. The Jewish christian, and heathen sacrifices, are alike to it the evidences of weakness. It prides itself in being free from the common prejudices of the race. It professes to regard, as of some account, the duties which men owe to one another, but makes of no account the duties which are peculiarly owed to God. It admits morality into its creed, but rejects piety; and clothed with power, it persecutes the religious, and tolerates the profane. These three forms, Paganism, Mahometanism, and Infidelity, show man's religion as carried to its highest state of perfection; and they are alike in this, that they have no Savior for a ruined world and have no provision for the renovation of the soul. Such are the wretched provisions, and gloomy prospects, man makes for himself, when he undertakes to provide for the well being of his soul, and for eternity. But, where the religion of God is professedly received, the religion of man is continually mixing itself with it, and polluting it. Some of the strong features of paganism and infidelity, are ever intruding themselves into the christian sanctuary, and defiling the sacrifice. While the infinite and uncreated Jehovah is not brought within the reach of human sensation by a material image, he is divested of his essential nature as effectually by an erroneous doctrinal statement, or a perverted conception of his character; and even the grosser forms of paganism have been cherished in the church which claims to be only true and universal, and the invisible God is represented in his earthly temples by metal, and wood, and canvass, and at this hour the demand and reverence for such articles of man's manufacture is increasing, not only in



Romanism, but in English and American Episcopacy; and the unmeaning mummary which attends the image worship is not diminished, while the decayed bones of some supposed worthy dead, and fragments of the imagined cross excite the spirit of devotion, and the souls of the departed answer the place of the demons of the pagan, to become intercessors with the Supreme God.

Infidelity, too, which is one of the more perfect forms of man's religion, is every where doing its work, where the religion of God is known and professedly received. Reason, which is the presiding Genius in this system, comes to revelation without laying aside any of its claims to dictatorship. It culls and mars the heavenly record to suit itself; and when its system is complete, it bears more of the impress of man, than of God. Its aim is to bring the system of truth and duty down to the nature, while the plan of God's religion is to bring the nature up to the system. Man's religion makes its prescriptions on the supposition, that the race is less in spiritual ruin than it is, and more easily capable of restoration and perfection; God's religion supposes the ruin is complete, and effectual deliverance comes only from God. Man's religion, with its imperfect views of the difficulty, relies much on outward forms and ceremonies, and external applications; God's religion relies more upon inward purity, and spiritual renewal. Man's religion always depends much on the merit of his works; God's upon faith, which worketh by love. Full reliance on the one leads to joy, peace, confidence of acceptance with God, triumph in death, and to a happy immortal life; the other at best is not free from doubt, ends in despair, and a misera-

ble eternity. Man's religion is the most popular, because the most common, easy, and natural, but is worth little here, and nothing hereafter; God's is more difficult, but more precious here and hereafter—it includes every thing desirable. How long then, “halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, follow him.” Which ever has claims to the true religion, embrace it with decision, and pursue it with determination. Do you say in view of the evidence in behalf of the religion of God, and with the spectators of the miraculous fire which consumed Elijah's sacrifice, “The Lord he is the God”—the religion of the Gospel is the only religion for a sinner. Then at once choose it, and practice it. If the Lord be God, follow him. Be consistent with your avowal. The pagan is not only such in theory, but in practice. He not only believes in the idol, but professes it, and he worships it. The Mussleman not only believes in the prophet, but he obeys him at every sacrifice. The Infidel not only disbelieves in revelation, but he acts as if he did. But under the Gospel we have the strange exhibition, no where else to be seen, of multitudes admitting that the system of truth, and duty, presented in scripture, is the only rational and safe one; and yet, practically rejecting it, and professedly saying, they desire none of its benefits—admitting they are sinners, exposed to the very justice and condemnation which the scripture declares; and yet unconcerned—acknowledging that Christ is the only Savior, and not applying to him for salvation—believing that without holiness they cannot see the Lord, and are unconcerned to obtain it—that without true religion they are going to hell as fast as the moments fly, yet

making no special effort to escape it; or, if any effort is made, it is as one that halts in going. Why this indecision? Is it because there is no danger? The danger is intimated by the fire which consumed the sacrifice of Elijah, the emblem of the consuming justice of God. Nothing within its reach could stop its progress. The water about the altar was as dry fuel. This which made the Savior exclaim on the cross, "I thirst." This justice has already kindled the regions of hell, to await the lost sinner's coming.

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#### REMARKS.

Does not the certainty of the sinner's condition becoming more hopeless, require decision? Does not the length of time you have already been halting afford a reason that it should cease? If your case is not soon decided favorably, it will be by death and the judgment. While you hesitate, your time does not linger, and your condemnation slumbereth not. How long halt ye? Choose ye this day whom ye will serve,

## LECTURE XXIII.

### ELIJAH'S DESPONDENCY.

And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God. And he said, Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.—1. KINGS 19: 7, 8, 11, 12.

In every individual's history, there are reverses, not only in the providential circumstances of his condition, but also in the feelings, and state of his mind. The brave do not always shew valor, nor the timid cowardice. These changes in the state of feeling, are not always to be accounted for by the difference of the external circumstances. The greatest intrepidity is often seen in the most trying conditions, while irresolution and discouragement are the most manifest where there is little to fear. What is true of the states of the mind in reference to ordinary subjects, is also true of its religious emotions. If it be the christian's privilege sometimes to ascend the mount of transfiguration, and to behold, with unaccustomed vision, the mediatorial glories, as he contemplates the decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem; ere he is aware, he has to descend into the vales below, and his depression is often the greater by its contrast with the elevation to which he had been admitted, and the gloom of



his reversed state of mind, the more deep and insupportable, by comparing it with the brightness of its former state. These changes of religious emotion, are not always owing to sinful, or even moral causes; but often to bodily constitution, and physical temperament.

Such is the intimate connection and constant fellowship between the soul and body, in the present organization, that there must always be a sympathy of the one with the other. And if the body through which the soul receives its impressions from without, and also manifests itself, be under the influence of nervous derangement, it is as might be supposed, if the soul partakes of it. When such is the cause of religious discouragement, it is not so much, *more grace* which the individual needs, as *health*; not so much an increased attention to the means of grace as medicine; not so much seclusion for meditation and prayer, as exercise, and the diversion of his mind to other objects. The remedy should always be adapted to the nature of the disease. In the case supposed, the disease is more physical than moral, and the remedy should be accordingly. But discouragement, seclusion, and inaction, are not always to be referred to an excusable cause; or to be palliated by bodily temperament. A moral delinquency is often the main-spring of its motion. Being wrong in its cause, discouragement and melancholy are its punishment. The best cure for religious discouragement, as prescribed by the best moral physicians, is engagement in the duties of vigorous and active piety. In administering strength to the weak, the soul will get strength itself. If you doubt the strength of your graces, the best way to dissipate it, is to prove their strength by vigorous action. Noth-

ing so well removes the delusion of an individual, who has strength sufficient to walk, but thinks he cannot through nervous debility, as to put him to walking. So, if one doubts his possession of the essential christian virtues, let him prove their existence by their exercise. If they will not bear to be exercised, then he will have good reason to conclude that they are in a feeble or non-existent state. He may not hesitate, and protract doubt and despondency, whether he is possessed of the essential grace of christian charity, for instance, and to ascertain the point, retire for self-examination. A better way to prove it is, to go forth at once to the active duties of benevolence. In this way, proof will manifest itself, as in the day-light, and he may leave his painful ploddings after it in the invisible recesses of his heart. In this way, he may bring the case to a speedy decision; for he may easily come to the conclusion, that graces which will not bear to be exercised, are not worth possessing. But for want of vigorously seizing opportunities to do good, for consulting and following the weaker passions, and less sanctified affections, even good and useful men, have often retarded or thrown back the success of a good cause; and public morality and religion, when on the very eve of triumph, for want of a final stroke, and one more bold and successful step, have fallen back for years or generations.

Who, in reading the history of this distinguished prophet but a minute before, would expect, so soon, to find him hiding himself from the view of man? Just now you saw him braving the royal authority, combined with the influence of the false prophets of a nation, and a general popular support; no sooner does he destroy the prophets—the strongest bulwark

of that influence with which he had to contend—then you see him absconding in the darkness of the night, towards the wilderness of Judea. He who just now seemed to have the heavens at his command, and a kingdom moving at his nod, is sitting under a Juniper tree, solitary and disconsolate. He who just before, by his prayer, brought the fire of heaven to consume the sacrifice, and confound a rebellious nation, and opened the flood-gates of the firmament to water a thirsty land, is now wishing for himself that he might die. What has occasioned this sudden reverse in the feelings of one before whom kings were afraid, and false prophets died? A wicked woman had threatened his life, and all his courage has fled. But why should he have been afraid, who was armed with the panoply of heaven? Why should he flee, in whose behalf miraculous agency was exercised at his bidding? Why did he not push forward a conquest of reform, so auspiciously begun, till Baal had given up the ghost in the land of Israel? The christian is only what grace makes him. He is valiant in God's cause only, when he is so by faith. It is only in the exercise of this grace, he can say to the mountain in his way, "Be thou plucked up, and cast into the sea," and it obeys him. When this falters, like Samson shorn of his locks, he is weak as other men. No display of the power and grace of God previously made to us, will be, of itself, an effectual security against this weakness on our part, or against the violence of the enemies of truth on the other. Past conviction of the truth, and experience of the grace of God, will not secure us against the recurrence of future temptation, or be a sufficient support under it; neither will the most

convincing evidence of truth, or the most clear displays of grace, keep the enemies of the Gospel in continued silence. But, its very success the more excites the opposition of the hearts of those, who are not subdued by its influence. What could have been more convincing than the scene between Elijah and the false prophets? What blessing more calculated to melt the stubborn hearts into gratitude, than fruitful and bountiful rains upon a country perishing by three years and a half famine? Who would expect the instrument of such a blessing to be the object of the deadly hatred of those who owed their life and comfort to his interference. But such is man: he likes the good when it ministers to his pleasure, but hates the giver if he requires him to forsake his sins. Thus, he who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, the Elias of the New Testament, when he came to prepare the way of the Lord, and preached repentance, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand, exposed himself to the rage of the wicked, and was beheaded at the instigation of a woman. But when the distinguished friends of truth, and of God, tremble at the menacing aspect of their enemies, and leave them to occupy the field without further conflict, the triumph of the wicked is certain, and their final destruction sure. Nothing more is necessary to secure this, than for the men and means to be removed, which they dislike. When the candlesticks are removed, entire darkness succeeds, and the blackness of darkness is the result. The elements of darkness and light. sin and holiness, hold perpetual conflict. The earth is their battle field. The righteous and the wicked, those who hold the truth, and those who adopt error, the sincere and



the hypocritical, are the visible contending agents. With these on one side, the devil, and his messengers of kindred spirit, co-operate; on the other, God and his angels. Wickedness pre-occupies the territory, backed by all its agencies. Every advance of truth and holiness is by conquest—by an aggressive movement of righteousness upon sin. Sin only asks to be let alone, to make its dominion complete and eternal. It need not to call in auxiliary forces to secure its victims, if it never be assailed by the agents of righteousness. If holiness ever secures subjects, it must be the assailant party, and intrude upon already occupied territory. Let its agents only be dormant, and the dominion of the world to sin, is safe. Sin is always more vigilant, and active on the field of conflict, than holiness; is more ready, also, to be the assailant. Holiness is an element, in every form of its approach, which is most repugnant to sin, and which it repels with the whole force of its nature. Sin yields only as it dies; and holiness only by the death of its opposer. Only let any community of mankind alone, and their sinfulness will be complete, and their condemnation sure. Let any sinner have his desire in this respect gratified, and his damnation slumbereth not. Elijah was, doubtless, aware of this fact, and that while men slept, the enemy sowed tares; but human nature cannot sustain itself against every discouragement. Hope expires after every effort is tried without effect, and the servant of the Lord says, “I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught. Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. Oh

that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night. Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage, there is no cluster to eat, my soul desireth the first ripe fruit. The good man is perished, and there is none upright among men." Such have been the moanings of many of the Lord's faithful servants, and the Juniper tree often suited their feelings better than the pulpit. Great as were the prophet's discouragements, he, perhaps, was too hasty, and did wrong in giving up his people, and surrendering himself to despondency. We should be very sure that we have the will of the Lord to direct us in resigning responsible stations, and forsaking that place of trust and privilege in the church in which providence has placed us. Yet, how few of the professors of modern piety, under the ungrateful treatment which he received, would not have retired sooner. How common it is for those who have borne responsibility, who have made sacrifices of time and money for the good of others, if it be ill requited, if instead of gratitude, they receive ill-will, to feel that they will do no more. How often it occurs, in the present state of the church, that when every thing is not conducted to their mind, for the slightest causes of dissatisfaction, and especially if any effort is made to correct their wrongs by the exercise of the discipline of the house of God, that persons retire from the church of their adoption, and seek to obtain satisfaction in the indulgence of bad passions, and in endeavoring to injure the cause they had voluntarily pledged themselves to support. How different from this was the example of Christ. He never forsook even

that church which, by his perfect discernment, he pronounced to be a congregation of hypocrites, and died under its censure. But, though the prophet may have acted imprudently, in seeking seclusion at a time when he was not manifestly successful in establishing the truth, and in giving himself up to melancholy forebodings; yet the Lord did not forsake him, but in that solitary retreat which he had selected, to cherish and give utterance to the bitterness of his spirit, he sent his angel to him with food and drink, to support and encourage his disconsolate nature. Upon the strength of this, he goes forty days to Horeb, where Moses had lived forty days without food before him. Thus the giver of the law, and the restorer of the law, resembled him who was the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, in this, that each lived the same length of time without the natural supports of life, and illustrating the truth, that man's better life is not by bread alone, but by the word of God, and communion with him; and that he who will do his will, has bread to eat that the world knoweth not of. But God will not suffer good and useful men long to remain inactive. If they decline their duty from sinful motives, he will bring them to repentance, and to discharge it, by gentle means, or if more severe are necessary, like Jonah, as it were, through the belly of hell. The prophet lodged securely in the cleft of the rock, perhaps where Moses was when the Lord passed by and proclaimed his goodness, and hopes, perhaps from this favored spot to be removed to heaven, from the strife of men, and an unbelieving world. Suddenly he is interrupted by a strong wind, which rent the mountain. After this an

earthquake, and a fire, producing a scene most sublime, and like that which enveloped the mount when the law was given, and Israel exceedingly feared, and quaked. After this, a still small voice, which convinced him the Lord was there, and caused him to wrap his face in his mantle, in token of his deeply felt humility. By this it was designed that he should be taught, that he should follow up the miraculous display of divine agency, with the less observed and ordinary means, if the reformation of Israel would be completed—That miraculous agency by which the attention of the world was arrested—that the law which thunders guilt and condemnation in its awakened ear, are designed only to prepare the way for the less observed, but more powerfully efficacious voice of the Spirit, through the Gospel.

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REMARKS.

We may learn from the subject,

First, That no displays of the power and grace of God, no enjoyment of peculiar privileges, will secure us against trials, or, without supports of grace, prevent us from showing weakness, or yielding to sin. The promise is, As thy day is, so shall thy strength be; and the command is, Watch, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The lesson from example is, That Elijah prevailed with heaven, and then fled to repine. Christ partook of the Supper before he suffered. Peter the same night denied his Lord, and Judas betrayed him.

Second, That the encouragements to him who is jealous for the cause of God, and is ready to be discouraged by the prevalence of iniquity, are greater than he is ready to suppose. In times of general



declension, there may be more with him in spirit than he imagined. Elijah thought himself left alone, while seven thousand were with him, and he knew it not. Thus, too, the number of the saved at last may exceed expectation, when God's hidden ones shall be brought to light, and the apostle's vision be realized, of a great number which no man can number, out of every kindred, and nation, and people.

Third, We may learn to rely for this result, not so much upon extraordinary, apparently powerful, and noisy means, as upon the less observed, ordinary, and yet more efficacious means of the Gospel, attended by the life-giving Spirit of God. The most that the storm, or the earthquake can do, even when accompanied with fire, is to awaken attention. The law itself can do no more than rend the mountain. It must be the still voice of the Spirit that will melt the heart, and whisper to it peace.

## LECTURE XXIV.

### TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH.

“And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither; so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elias saw it, and he cried, My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”—2 KINGS 2: 8, 11, 12.

A brief, and comprehensive view of the transitory nature of present things is given us, when it is said by the apostle, the things that we see are temporal. They had a beginning, and they will have an end. If we go up the current of ages that are past, we soon come to a time when they were not; and if we go down the stream of ages that are before us, we soon come to a time when they will be no more. Mutability is stamped on every thing visible. The eye of observation can attest this, apart from the Bible. The hardest and firmest materials of the present system, give evidence of approaching dissolution. Not only animated, but lifeless nature gives evidence that it is subject to the universal law of change—that it has its youth, its maturity, and its old age. The surface of the earth, as well as its productions, is undergoing a constant mutation. The low valley is sending its soil to the lower deep of the ocean, and the lofty mountain, supported by its apparently immoveable, rocky foundations, is falling away, and filling up the

waste places below. Vegetable nature, which in its youth looks so fresh and vigorous, as if it had started on an unending progress of growth and durability, before it has time to diffuse its fragrance, and unfold its plumage, is checked by some of nature's reverses, and its beauty fades, its verdure grows dim, its delicate organs are deranged, and at length is separated into its original elements, and is seen no more. The animal tribes come into life with a mechanism so complete, as to prove that no other than infinite wisdom has been the workman. Yet such is their limited destiny, that they seem hardly to have fairly begun the play of life, or to have time sufficient to exhibit the wisdom of their author, or the design of their creation, till their existence ceases, and they are seen no more. Even those mighty masses of matter which roll around and above us, and which, because we perceive no sensible decay in them, we are the most likely to imagine are imperishable, even these must finish their present courses, and be laid aside with the lesser things of creation, as having completed the design of their creator, and be new modeled before they will be prepared to weather the lapse of eternity. The earth will be consumed; the light of the sun will be extinguished; the stars will cease from their twinkling, and the heavens shall fly away from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and no place shall be found for them.

Man, in common with the other parts of creation, partakes of this changeableness. "He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down at noon, and withered; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."

But the saying that the things that are unseen are eternal, is as briefly descriptive of the future, as the saying of the present, that the things that are seen are temporal. By no great effort of the imagination we can go back through a succession of changes to the beginning of the things temporal, and trace them down to the last of the series; but by no effort of the imagination can we trace the succession of things eternal to the termination of the series. Mutability is stamped upon every thing in the one period, and immutability is enstamped upon every thing in the other period. In the present time, visible nature seems to bear a resemblance to man, the most finished part of the workmanship; in the future time, every thing bears more of the resemblance of God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The present economy, both of nature and of grace, bears a resemblance to the first efforts of human genius, which are laid aside for that which is more perfect and abiding. The imperfection of the workmanship is adapted to the imperfection of man, its occupant, and chief observer. "Now we know in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away." Both we, and the world, are in a state of infancy. Now we think as a child, but when we become men, we will put away childish things, and the economy will be perfected, and suited to the manly capacity.

The common method by which our fallen and sanctified humanity makes its transit from the less to the more perfect economy, is by the changes of death, corporeal dissolution, and reanimation of bodily life. But this is a way which has been superinduced by sin, and was not the original



design for the race, if unfallen, nor essential to the perfection of the economy intended. Death is the interruption of a perfect plan, and the retarding the progress in a system where all things were pronounced good. Whatever good may come out of it by the overrulings of infinite wisdom, itself cannot be regarded otherwise than as marring a beautiful workmanship, and holding back the subject of it, for the time of its dominion, from the perfection of his being, and the happiness of which he might be capable.

In the plan of boundless wisdom and omnipotence, it cannot be supposed necessary that he should make and destroy his workmanship, before he brings it to perfection; to produce disease, and the suffering of death, and the gloom and solitude of the grave for centuries, in order to perfect the being, and prepare him to appreciate the happiness of heaven. No such unnatural war upon nature has been experienced among sinless angels. Even the offending part of their number did not die, and resign a part of their organization to a dissolution for ages. Existence may run on then, and advance to higher perfection eternally, or be made the subject of suffering without end, and not experience such a change as is known in our world by the term death.

But though it is not necessary for the wisdom of God to repeat its efforts on a created system, in order to perfect it, or to punish the offending part of his subjects, to dissolve their natures, and set their elements afloat among disorganized matter; though it may not be necessary for him, as for man, to take down the machinery after having put it to work and seen its defects, and remedy them

by a new and more perfect erection; it may be necessary as a means of discipline to the offending, and of education, and improvement to all the intelligent creation. In every species of mental progress, we know that our advancement is from the defective sketches, to the more perfect models; from the scattered elements of thought, to the more perfect combinations; God, therefore, as the great instructor of the universe of intelligences, may be pursuing a similar plan. The creation of this world as an experimental lesson, beautiful, and majestic, and wonderful as it is, may be only as the first lesson of a well versed preceptor to his primary school, designed merely as an elementary step in the boundless field of the divine displays of workmanship. And man, perfect as he was, when he came new made from his maker's hand, was no more than the alphabet in the boundless range of science, compared with what he may be in his second, and future organization. And with such ideas of the resources of infinite wisdom, and power, and such delightful anticipations, the apostle was inspired when he said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." And as we are instructed in seeing the workmanship progress from its beginning to its completion, more than we would be by beholding it finished; so God may design by taking down the first building of man, and the material world, with which he stands connected, to instruct the intelligent universe, more fully than otherwise could have been done, the infinity of his wisdom, and benevolence,

and grace. And this dispensation towards man, and this material world, may be but a manifestation of the economy which is now going on in the regions of the universe, from which revealed light has not yet reached our eye; and but a specimen of that progress of improvement which will go on, not only upon intellectual and moral natures, but also upon material, in eternity forever. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin." It is the threatened penalty of violated law, the capital punishment inflicted upon a world of offenders. From the literal execution of this universal sentence, Elijah was exempted, and without the dissolution, and the corruption which are the common lot of his race, he was transferred to a higher and happier existence. To have died at all under the original constitution of man, would have been miraculous; but under the constitution as it is altered by sin, not to die is an exception to the uniform law of our nature. It would be as great a miracle among angels for one to die, as it is among men for one not to die. Perhaps it is only in this part of creation that intelligent beings are made the prey of death, and an earthly receptacle is made the abiding place of its inhabitants. Enoch and Elijah, privileged above their fellows, were allowed to take their bodies, at the same time with their souls, to a better state. The apostle has shown us a mystery with regard to the future, far more august than this, that we shall not all die, but be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the whole living population of the earth shall be changed, and the saying shall be brought to pass, death is swallowed up in victory, and the universal thanksgiving be sung to

God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and death, the unopposed devastator of a world, will be challenged in the language of triumph, to answer; where is now his sting, and the grave, which has wasted the beauty, and fed upon the dust of unnumbered millions of this fair creation, to tell, where is now his victory. The world of the living are at once placed beyond his reach, and the world of the dead, over whom he has held uninterrupted dominion for ages, rescued from his relentless grasp. The case of Elijah, then, is an example of what will be a general fact with regard to the righteous, who will form the last generation of men in this eventful world. Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."

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#### REMARKS.

From this extraordinary narrative, you may learn the following reflections:

First, That the best preparation for an honored and happy departure from the present state, is to be actively employed in your proper duty, and zealously engaged for the honor of God, and the good of the church. In the closing scenes of Elijah's history, there is no period of inaction and repose assigned him, spent in quiet meditations of his approaching change. But a little before, you see him denouncing judgment upon the king of Samaria for consulting an idol God, about his recovery bringing down the thunder of heaven, and consuming two captains of fifties, with their companies; visiting the colleges at Bethel, and Jericho, and giving his counsels to those who were there



preparing to be the future ministers of the church after his departure; dividing Jordan with his mantle, the badge of his authority, as Moses had divided the Red Sea, and Joshua Jordan, before him, like the Savior in his approach to mount Olivet with his disciples, talking with Elisha of the things of the kingdom, preparing him to fill his responsible station in his absence, and imparting to him his final benediction. Though he was aware the day of his departure had come, that his earthly friends should see him no more, that unfrequented regions were soon to be trodden by him, and unrealized visions were soon to open upon his view; and though he knew not the nature of that change which was to disengage him from earth, and give to his body such attraction for distant worlds, as would break up its affinity for this: these thoughts give him no concern. He is engaged giving counsel to his successor, till in stately style the messengers approach him. He mounts the chariot with its fiery horses, from the better country, and with the speed of ascending flame, winged with the whirlwind, and with the angels for his charioteers, he leaves the abode of men, and becomes the associate of angels. Such honor, substantially have all the saints. It is the good man's privilege, that his last end shall be peace, with the Savior in the arms of his faith to say, Now let thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, I have finished my course: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. The Savior said he would come again, and receive his disciples to himself. This promise he sufficiently fulfills, if he sends his angels, whom he makes his ministers, as a flame of fire for energy, to bear them in their hands to the house

not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Second, Though the departure of the righteous be necessary to the perfection of their being, and the attainment of the high end of their existence; yet the state and church may suffer loss by their absence. In view of this fact it may have been, that Elisha exclaimed, "The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." The righteous of a nation are its best defence: By their prayers, by their example, by diffusing the principles of righteousness, by reforming the wicked, and by teaching the principles of industry and economy. Joseph, by superior skill, because he was a man of faith, saved Egypt. Daniel imparted counsel to eastern monarchies. Esther saved the Jews in a hundred and twenty provinces; and, our Washington, under God, because he was a man of prayer, gave independence to these States. Let pigmie politicians squabble in the capitol about the best means of a nation's wealth, and a nation's defence, the truth remains, that it is righteousness that exalteth a nation, and that sin is the disgrace of any people; and that nation, or kingdom, that will not serve the Lord, he will destroy.

Third, We may infer the nearness of earth to heaven, and the interest which intelligent beings elsewhere take in the present and eternal well-being of the men of this world. The nearness of places is estimated very much, by the speed and facility of conveyance. Thus, Philadelphia is not more than one-third the distance from us it was formerly, and London is almost as near as Philadelphia was once, and Palestine is as near as England. By the speed of conveyance on the highway on which angels travel, and the souls of the redeemed

to their abode, we are brought into their neighborhood; hence the speed and energy of their ministry to the heirs of promise, and their interest in their welfare. Their interest is one, not of those who have a globe between them, but of those who are in our immediate vicinity. They rejoice at one sinner's conversion, they attend for his deliverance when he prays, and conduct him, when he dies, to the bosom of Abraham. But these cherubs which illuminate the path to glory so brightly for the righteous, look with a fiery hue toward the destruction of the wicked. They are the ministers of justice, as well as mercy.

## LECTURE XXV.

### DEFECTIVE SPRINGS HEALED.

“And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said bring me a new cruse and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake. And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.”—2 KINGS 2: 19—24.

The prophets of Israel were a peculiar class of men. They seemed to have been commissioned as the reprovers and instructors of all other classes. Though poor, and without worldly influence, they dared to rebuke kings on their thrones, and denounce the judgments of heaven upon them for their sins, to give them their commissions, and take them away at pleasure. They seem also to have had a control over the priesthood itself, to instruct it in its duties, and to correct its abuses. The prediction of future events was only a part of their business. A greater part of the official duty of most of them appears to have been, to teach the nation its duty, and reform it from its backslidings. Little of what Elisha said is recorded for the instruction of future ages. We see him more as a



man of busy activity for the benefit of the age in which he lived, than as preparing volumes of instruction for the ages to come. If he was less bold and intrepid than Elijah, he is not less engaging in the amiableness of his character. If Elijah was the Luther of the reformation; Elisha was the Melancthon—both necessary, in their place, to fulfill the appropriate duties assigned them by him who giveth to every man severally as he will. All have not the same gifts, but all are required to exercise the gifts they have, for the good of their fellow men, and for the glory of God. He that has but one talent, is bound as much to use that to profit, as he who has five. A judgment will be passed upon us in case of misimprovement—not because we have hid five in the earth, but because we have not doubled one.

When Elisha was first called to his public station by the particular direction of God, and the instrumentality of Elijah, he was engaged in the laborious, but honorable occupation of cultivating the soil, procuring his living, according to the original denunciation upon man when he sinned, by the sweat of his face. Though in his retired profession he appears to have had considerable property, and to have been in the midst of business, he did not consult with flesh and blood, but immediately made arrangements to follow the will of heaven in a new and more spiritual occupation. Like the disciples when called from the fishing-boat, he left all, and followed the Lord.

We have the best reason to expect progress in holiness, and advancement to a wider sphere of usefulness, when we are faithfully filling the station we occupy. He that is faithful in that which is

least, will be faithful in much; and if you be unfaithful in that which is your own, who will give you another man's; and if you be unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to you the true riches. It is a pleasing peculiarity of the religion of God, that it is not restricted in its gracious and comforting influences, to conditions or stations of life; that the visits of grace may come to the ploughman, as well as the divine; and to become fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, it is not necessary to forsake our calling, or become slothful in business; and, that he who is faithful in the workshop, and in the field, while God calls him no higher, is equally with others doing his duty, and accepted of God. It is when you are busy in one lawful calling, that you may expect to hear your Master say to you, Come up higher. And the Savior gives it as a reason why we should be engaged in our spiritual pursuits, and watch and pray always, that we know not when the Son of man will come, to take us to the higher employments of heaven. And he that serves God most in the humbler pursuits of time, will be best prepared for the more exalted pursuits of eternity.

Elisha was not long favored with the presence and instruction of Elijah, his spiritual father; and sooner perhaps than he expected, he had to assume the responsibilities for which he felt himself inadequate. But to prepare himself with more than his own resources, he sought and obtained such a portion of that spirit from above, which it is the common privilege of all to seek, and a portion of that miraculous agency which transported Elijah to the better country, remained with him on earth, to prove his mission, and to shew that he was the

proper successor of him who was gone. God is not confined to one set of instruments, to perform his work. As in nature, the seed of the vegetable kingdom is in itself, to secure succession, growth, beauty and fruitfulness, to the end of time; so in the spiritual kingdom, the seeds of the necessary gifts, and graces, are sown in the productive hill of Zion, which, by the established means of God's appointment, will continue to vegetate the plants of righteousness in the garden of the Lord, until in a joyful maturity, they will all be removed to the ever-verdant Paradise above.

Jordan obeys the mantle in the hand of Elisha, as it did when waved by its former owner, and he is satisfied that the Lord God of Elijah is with him. Bearing the credentials of a prophet, invested with the plenary power of his office, he is applied to at Jericho, to heal the defective springs of water. Though nature was pronounced very good, when it came from the finishing hand of its maker, sin has introduced into it many derangements. The site of Jericho, for the iniquity of its original inhabitants, had been subjected to a curse—the fountains of water producing sterility; and a curse had been pronounced by Joshua, upon the man who would rebuild the city. Men, however, will not be deterred by the prospect of disease or loss, from places which hold out favorable inducements. To make gain, men will go into the most forbidding regions, and expose not only their bodies to disease, but also their souls to the contagion of spiritual disease and death. But often even to such places the means of healing comes. By some means a school of the prophets had been established on this forbidden spot. Though such insti-

tutions are not regarded by all according to their worth, and especially in their immediate vicinity; yet, so far as any pecuniary advantage will accrue, they will be valued by those who would lightly esteem them on other grounds. Whatever advantage this school was to Jericho on other grounds, does not appear; but under such a patron as Elijah, the best results may be supposed. And it is probable that it was owing to its location there, that Elisha thought proper to employ miraculous agency in healing its springs, and thus it is an illustration of a common benefit which is derived from well conducted public schools. If they are as they should be, and especially if the seeds of knowledge grow with the principles of piety, and the grace of God, like salt, is thrown into these fountains of a nation's educated youth, they become as fertilizing streams over the land, to enrich it, not only intellectually and spiritually, but also to add to its physical comfort. Such institutions are always valued and sustained, in proportion to a people's advancement in civilization and improvement, and will be regarded for the purposes of the church, according to the desire for spiritual instruction, and the general diffusion of it through the world.

Though we are not to imitate the prophet, in the kind of means he used for the healing of the waters, we may learn something from the manner in which he employs them. He applies the healing process not to the streams, but to the fountains. Had he healed a single reach of the stream, as it was passing on, the benefit would have been only temporary, and the bitterness of the spring being unaffected, would soon have poured forth an abundant supply of the original quality, producing all the



disastrous effects as before. So, if the barrenness of our fallen nature is to be healed, it is to be done at the spring-head. Out of the heart are the issues of life. If the life is to be made right, it is by correcting the source of its actings. God's plan, and man's, for effecting this, are different. Man's is by correcting the stream; God's by purifying the fountain. Man commences his operations upon the fruit; God upon the tree. Man summons his forces against the habit of wrong doing; God against the propensity. Man says, I will guard against this evil temper; God says, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, that ye may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them." We are disposed to make clean the outside of the cup, or platter; but God assures that neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. We are disposed to amend what is wrong in the action, without attacking the principle; but God, whose work is perfect, if he will effect any thing valuable, new makes the principle, and those who are healed under the heavenly process, are born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

But, though God heals the waters, the people must employ the instrument, and Elisha must take the cruse, and the salt, and cast it into the fountains. There must be the use of the means, though there appear to be no adaptation, or proportion between the means and the end. Though man can do nothing efficiently, he must work as if he could. He must call forth his energies against the common foes of his spirituality. He must concentrate his efforts, to eradicate the root of bitterness from his nature, as if it was to be effected by his own

unaided strength, and at the same time feel that it is not himself, the cruse, the salt, nor the prophet that will effect it, but the Lord. And when the work of his renewal is done, allow it to be said, from the full emotions of a grateful soul, to the praise of his glorious grace, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters." How disproportionate the means to the end. The Savior puts clay on the eyes of a blind man, and he sees. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. How often, for want of seeing sufficient efficacy in the means, do men refuse to employ them. They ask, what good can they do? and placing their ignorance, or presumption, above the wisdom of God, they continue in the gall of bitterness, and in a land of spiritual sterility forever. It is pleasing to reflect, too, when a work is done in God's way, and by his efficiency, how durable it is. "So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha." Man's independent workmanship is like himself, less beautiful, but equally evanescent as the flower. Having no root in themselves, they are soon scorched and withered away. But where God has begun a good work, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. He shall flourish like the palm tree, and bring forth fruit even in old age. He is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf never fadeth."

Having accomplished the work which he had to do at Jericho, Elisha returned to Bethel, where was another school for youth. When he came

near [the place, he was assailed by a company of idle and unmannerly boys from the town, and reproached for his age and religion, two things which, most of all, entitle a man to the respect of the young. He turned, and with the mingled emotions of pity and indignation, pronounced upon them the judgment of heaven. We may not suppose he cursed them profanely, or in the indulgence of his own angry spirit; but that he predicted the immediate punishment of their sin, which was soon executed upon them, by two bears from the adjoining wood. The text does not say, they were killed by these furious wild beasts; but, probably some of them were, and all torn and wounded. It is the will of God, that there should be a proper respect for age, and office. The hoary head is a crown of glory when found in the way of righteousness. Honor thy father and mother, is a command which applies not only to parents, but to all superiors. It is written, thou shalt not revile God's high priest. Honor to whom honor, fear to whom fear. It was one source of Job's affliction, that young children despised him, that they that were younger than he had him in derision. It is to be presumed, however, that these youth did not act in this manner without some encouragement, in the instruction and example of their parents.

Bethel was one of the places where Jereboam's idols were set up, and worshiped. These were, no doubt, the children of the false worshipers, who disliked the true religion, and its ministers. Children are very likely to partake of the spirit of their parents. Those who had Job in derision, he says, were the children of base men. Where there is irreligion, we often find good manners. Where

both are wanting, it shows the lowest state of society. Where civility is wanting in children, it argues badly, both for the religion, and good manners of the parents. It is one of the commands of religion, as well as its fruit, to be courteous. Vulgar uncoothness is no more the offspring of religion, than it is of an improved civilization. We think we are not mistaken in believing that there is a decline in this respect, in the habits of the young, from the age of our fathers. The period of boyhood seems in a good measure to be done away with. Children pass at once from infancy to manhood, without, in feeling at least, living through the intermediate period. We learn too soon, and too far, that we live in a country of independence; and age, and office, too often fail to secure that respect which are their due, and to be a safe-guard against unmerited reproach. If man is ever to be right in any respect, he is to be so only by being taught. If his manhood is to be any thing as it should be, it is to be expected only by properly passing through his boyhood. The maxim is sufficiently true, As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined. If it is kept crooked while growing, it will not become straight afterwards. And the proverb is more true, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. If the tree is kept straight during its growth, it will not be likely to become bent afterwards. In this process of training, parents have the chief responsibility. In the neglect of this important duty they must expect, at some future time, to have their own hearts wrung with anguish. There was a sad lamentation in Bethel, when these children were made the prey of beasts, or were



carried home torn and bleeding. But who were to blame? Doubtless the parents chiefly. They themselves had whet the weapon by which they were pierced. A corrupt neighborhood influence may do much to destroy wholesome example at home. And if there is a consciousness of fidelity in the parent, he will have that to sustain him when the judgments of heaven fall upon a rebellious child; but what will support that parent who is conscious of having led his child astray, or grossly failed to teach him right? What will be the feelings of that parent, who must forever reproach himself with the loss of a child in the world of endless wo?

## LECTURE XXVI.

### WIFE OF THE DECEASED PASTOR HELPED,—SON OF THE RICH WOMAN OF SHUNAM RESTORED.

And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel: and he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunamite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.—2 KINGS 4: 6, 36.

The prophets of Israel were not like the priests, ministers by hereditary succession, but by special appointment. Neither had they, as the priests, a support secured them by law. They were, therefore, dependent for their living upon the voluntary contributions of the people. Except they had private fortunes, which it is likely was not often the case, their income was precarious. For this reason, this deceased servant of God not only left his family poor, but involved in debt. The preachers of the truth were not likely to be favored under the influence of such a king as Ahab, and in an age of such apostacy. He may have been one who, to save his life from the persecution of Jezebel, had been concealed in a cave, and been fed on bread and water by Obediah. It has generally been so throughout the history of the world, that the public servants of the true religion, have had but little of the wealth of the world, and have often been in want of its necessities. Even so distinguished a man as Paul, could say, I know how to be in want. The ministers of false religions have always been the best

supported. Being destitute of proper principle, they have availed themselves of ignorance and superstition to aggrandize themselves. The heathen priesthood and the Romish hierarchy, have never wanted for worldly accommodations. The prophets of Baal were fed at Jezebel's table, while the prophets of the Lord were fed in a cave. It is a dishonor to the believers in the true religion, that they have less of zeal and liberality to support it, than the devotees of superstition. That the families of their public religious servants should be in want, while their own are in affluence; that their own should be increasing in property, while those who serve them in the Lord, are sinking into poverty. Who, that has a heart not steeled with covetousness, can contemplate such a case as this, without emotion?

The loss of a husband, was enough for the widowed heart to endure. But, no sooner is the supporter and comforter of her life laid in the grave, than she is harrassed with the writs of a merciless creditor, and the last item of saleable property failing to discharge the debt, her two sons, the only remaining solace of her life, are levied upon, to be sold into six years' slavery, to meet the claim. Though the Jewish law does not directly command the seizing of the person of the debtor, or his children, it makes regulations respecting it, requiring them to be treated, not as bond servants, but as hired servants, and to be liberated at the seventh year. Neither the afflicted mother in this case, nor Elisha complains that the process is illegal, however severe it may appear, and the full exercise of the law of love in the heart of the creditor, would have prevented him from exercising it.

The Savior illustrated the benevolence of the principle, in the parable of the king who would take account of his servants: one being brought to him which owed him ten thousand talents; and as he had nothing to pay, he commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and payment to be made; such was the creditor's legal privilege. But, when the servant entreated for indulgence, the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. Here was the benevolence of the case: The law permitted him to exact the claim, but benevolence prevailed, so as to induce him to yield it. So, it often occurs in the history of legal justice, that charity is violated, and the man who is disposed always to avail himself of the benefit of law, is not likely to have much benevolence in his nature; and he will probably be just, no farther than the law will compel him. It may be proper here to mark a distinction between the moral, political, and ecclesiastical laws: The moral law, commands every thing spiritually good in its utmost perfection, and tolerates nothing wrong in the smallest degree; but the sentence of it is reserved to that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. The judicial law, commanded nothing morally bad, and forbid nothing morally good; but, as the sentence of it was to be pronounced by the civil magistrates, it did not insist upon the same perfection; it also had respect to the situation, character, and peculiar circumstances of the nation to be governed, and supposed the existence of some evils which could not be prevented without a constant miracle, and provided against their worst effects. A careful attention to this distinction, will account for many things tolerated in the



political law of Moses, which are condemned in the moral law of loving our neighbor as ourselves. From the nature of the case, mankind cannot be governed in their social capacity, in the state, and the church by the moral law, in all the excellence of its holy requirements, and the vigor of its penalty. It denounces death for every violation in thought, word, and action. If its penalty were inflicted, the whole race of men would be swept from their earthly existence in a moment. It is designed for the government of man as an individual, in the relations he sustains to his God, and God has reserved to himself the prerogative of judging, and punishing him. Hence it was, that no sooner did God give the moral law, than he added a modification of it, for the government of the nation, in its civil and ecclesiastical capacity. In the government of nations, it must be considered how far it is practicable, expedient, or conducive to the great ends of government under penal sanctions, to require all that is right, and forbid all that is wrong. In this respect, Israel was like other nations. Because civil institutions, or church rules are less perfect than the high standard of the moral law, provided they require of us nothing that is positively a violation of the moral law, is no reason why we should refuse allegiance to them, and be governed by them. On this principle, the Jews might have refused to be governed by the civil, and church law, which God gave them. Upon this principle, there could be neither nation nor church upon earth. Those, then, who refuse allegiance to the state, because its institutions are less perfect than the moral law requires of man as an individual, are aiming to adopt a principle, which, from the nature of the case, can never be executed

in human society, and which the great Lawgiver himself never designed should be. It is, doubtless, as much a sin in the sight of God, to violate the tenth commandment, which says, thou shalt not covet, as it is the eighth, which says, thou shalt not steal. But, can state, or church laws reach the one case as well as the other? Or shall we refuse connection with the one or the other, because their laws do not punish the want of benevolence as they do theft. The ground, therefore, assumed, and acted on by some professing christians, by which they refuse to acknowledge the government of these states, and perform some of the peculiar duties of citizens, because the constitutions are less perfect than the moral law, seem to be in error in their fundamental principle, and seem also to attach blame to the conduct of God himself, in not giving to the Jews as perfect an economy as he has done to the Christian church. Of the one, he himself says, it was only a shadow of good things to come, and made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better testament did. The fact itself, then, that an organization of church or state, is less perfect than the moral law, while it does not require the violation of that law, is not of itself sufficient reason why we should refuse, or break connection with that association.

But what the law cannot prevent, benevolence can alleviate; what justice cannot arrest, kindness can; and what the judge cannot do, the prophet can. Though the rigor of the law, urged on by the avaricious creditor, would deprive the disconsolate widow of the Lord's servant, of the only remaining dear supporters of a mother in poverty, miracle can accomplish what is despaired of by or-

dinary means; and the Lord effects by miracle, what he did not see proper to do by law. Nor is it more strange, that in a world of sinners, evils should occur in a political government over which God holds a providential control, than in a physical government over which he presides; that we should suffer by a law which is defective in charity, than by an atmosphere which is destructive of health? Provided we are satisfied it is the Lord's arrangement, we have as much reason for acquiescence in the one case, as in the other. So neither does it appear, that this woman, nor the prophet complained of the law, which, in her case, was about to operate so severely, as being unreasonable, and unrighteous; but she sought, as was right, some honest means to evade its execution. Unable to meet the demands of the law, she goes to the Gospel; unable to answer the demands of the judge, she applies to the prophet. By his assistance, what she lacked in gold, is made up in olive oil, which she exchanges for the purpose, and thus is able to meet the whole which was against her, besides a supply for her living. Happiness is restored to a disconsolate household, and a pious mother and her beloved sons, are permitted to live in a happy family society, freed, too, from the embarrassment of worldly circumstances, sooner than if he had remained, whose loss she so much deplored. How much better is God often to people than their fears. I have been young, says David, and now am old, and have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor their seed begging bread. The child of God can never be so safe as in his Father's hands, who is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Godliness hath the "promise of the life

that now is, and of that which is to come." If you ask God for bread only, he will not give you a stone. He delighteth in mercy, and to exercise it especially where the need is the greatest. The more helpless you feel, the more likely you are to be the objects of God's regard.

As we have seen the grace of God by the prophet, diffusing comfort through one poverty stricken household, and pouring the oil of joy into a widowed mother's wounded heart; next let us notice himself as the object of kindness, by a woman of distinction, whose circumstances were the reverse of the former. The Shunamite was blessed with wealth, and what was better, with a heart to use it for the glory of God, and the comfort of his servants. Besides affording the prophet the refreshments of her table, she built for him a chamber, and furnished it both for repose, and study. She thus honored the Lord with her substance. She gave more than a cup of cold water to this disciple, in the name of a disciple, and she did not lose a prophet's reward. Like Sarah of old, the Lord gave her the happiness, beyond her expectation, of embracing a son, to give exercise to maternal affection, and share with her the bounties of a providence which had been so richly bestowed. He that forsakes houses and lands, says the Savior, for my sake, and the gospel's, shall receive many fold more in this life, and in the life to come, life everlasting. It may not be more in kind, but it will be more in value. This woman of piety gives of her property for a becoming purpose. She receives a soul to be educated for immortality, and which the Savior intimates is of more worth than all the world; yet, how few believe that in casting their bread upon the waters,



they shall find it after many days. Who would not rather have the bonds and securities of men, than the promise God? How few practically believe, that in giving to the poor they are lending to the Lord, and are willing to take him for their pay-master. From the manner in which charities have to be doled out for the most worthy objects, it would seem that the prevailing feeling is, that whatever is given is lost, and whatever is given to us by the liberality of heaven, becomes ours in the most absolute sense, so that God himself cannot claim it afterwards. The providence of God, however, teaches us many impressive lessons of the vanity of earthly things, and the insecurity of earthly relationships. The estate is often soon taken from the heir, or the heir from the estate. And the rich, and the poor, are alike the subjects of bereavement. The prophet's widow is in danger of losing her sons by poverty; the rich Shunamite sends out her cheerful boy to the field in the morning, with his father, he sickens and dies upon her lap by noon: and religion is the common resource of both. The great woman of Shunam, and the widow of the deceased pastor, are here on a level, and the prophet's religion is the common deliverer of both. The one is as unable to bring her son back from death, as the other is to bring her sons from bondage. Whatever may be the number of the points of our independence, there are dependent points enough on which we are still compelled to lean, to teach us humility, and lead us to the resources of grace, as our only effectual support.

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REMARKS.

In view of the subject we remark:

First, That the only remedy for the moral and physical evils which oppress the world, is the Gospel, and the prevalence of that spirit of universal benevolence which it inculcates.

Second, As the oil did not stop while there was a vessel to receive it, you may be led to reflect on the sufficiency of grace, and its adaptation to fill every capacity. Thus through eternity, as the capacity of the soul enlarges, it will be supplied out of the fullness of him who filleth all in all.

Third, Parents are here reminded that they have no security for the life of their children, and that what should be done for their instruction and salvation to-day, should not be postponed till to-morrow.

Fourth, Let children learn, that since they may sicken and die in an hour, they should remember their Creator in their youth. To such the gracious promise is, "They that seek me early shall find me."

## LECTURE XXVII.

### NAAMAN CURED.

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.—Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."—2 KINGS 5: 10, 14.

Every one claims for himself the right of doing what he pleases with his own. But this common privilege, which every one claims for himself, few are willing to allow to God. When the laborers received every one a penny a day, some murmured, that those who had labored but one hour, should receive as much as they who had borne the burden and heat of the day. To such the proprietor said, "Is thine eye evil, because I am good? Have not I a right to do what I will with mine own?" According to the reasoning of many, God cannot be a sovereign, without being unjust; and cannot be liberal to any, with the gifts which all have forfeited, without subjecting himself to the charge of being a respecter of persons. This same selfishness of human nature which would deprive God of his sovereignty, that it might equalize his gifts to men, proceeds a step further, and monopolizes them to itself. The same principle which is opposed to others receiving more than ourselves, is in favor of their receiving less. The fancied worthiness in us, which brings us to conclude that it would be unequal in God to give more to others than he does to

us, for the same reason easily brings us to the conclusion, that we have a claim for more than others. Hence, the origin of envy, and grieving at the good of others, also, a discontent with the allotments of providence. Thus, when the Savior, in the presence of the people of Nazareth, his native city, referred to the history of Naaman's miraculous cure, saying, "There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." They were wroth, and rose up, thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, that they might cast him down headlong. This intimation of our Lord, that he had a right to work his miracles where he pleased, exceedingly enraged them, as if it had been an inexcusable injustice. Those who are the least disposed to seek the peculiar blessings of God's grace in his appointed way, are the most disposed to claim them as their right, and the most ready to complain if they do not receive them. And such are only exasperated the more, if they are shown that God always dispenses his favors in that way which tends most to display his own glory, and especially the riches of his unmerited grace and mercy. The Jew is left in his formal religion, while the heathen idolater is made the living subject of his grace. The Syrian General is healed of his deadly disease by the instrumentality of Israel's prophet, and the power God, while leprous Israelites remain under the dominion of the disease. "There are none returned to give thanks to God save this stranger." They shall come from the east, and the west, and sit down in the kingdom, while the children of the kingdom are cast out. While we may be valuing ourselves for our peculiar



privileges, and saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, the Lord may be rejecting us from a place in the spiritual building, and be raising it up of other more suitable materials. We will be judged, not according to our visible, but according to our real relationship to the Redeemer; and our admission into the congregation of the sanctified will depend, not upon the fact, whether we have our name registered among the tribes of the Lord, but on the fact of our being healed of our spiritual diseases, and cleansed from our moral pollutions.

Naaman was a great man, chief under the king in the empire. He had been distinguished as the commander of the Syrian armies, in achieving victories for his country, even over Israel itself. The Jews say it was he who drew a bow at a venture, by which Ahab was killed; yet his greatness does not raise him above the calamities of life. "Every man," says Henry, "has some; but in his character something that blemishes and diminishes him; he may be very happy, or very good, yet not so happy, or so good as he should be. Naaman was as great as the world could make him, yet the lowest slave in Syria would not change skins with him." This should lead us to contentment with our lot. If the whole circumstances of those whom we are most disposed to envy were known, perhaps there is no one with whom we would change conditions; so equal, after all, are the dispensations of providence. And this may have been one of the lessons by which Paul learned, in whatever state he was, therewith to be content. Elevated as may be the rank of any one in the scale of power and opulence, he is still dependent upon the lowest. The captian of the

Syrian armies was dependent, for every thing that made life desirable, upon the knowledge and kindness of a Jewish servant girl. Such a system of dependency prevails through society, and all the works of God. So much is it in the power of every one to do good to others, and to increase the amount of human happiness. One child taught in the principles of true religion, may be a blessing to an empire. A servant-maid, instructed in the principles of the Bible, may teach senators wisdom, and recommend religion to a heathen kingdom. Those who occupy the high places of state, too often know nothing aright of the God of Israel, and the way of deliverance from their spiritual disease; and the knowledge of it must be pressed upon their attention by those of humbler stations. But the promptness with which Naaman availed himself of the information by which he might be healed, is a rebuke to most, in reference to the diseases of their souls. Though he obtains the information of a prophet at a distance, who can probably cure his disease, he immediately sets out on the journey. He loses no time by delay. He does this, though his information comes from so uninfluential a source—he does this, though there is not a certainty that the prophet is able, or willing, to afford him the desired remedy; and though labor, and expense are necessary to make the trial—he does it, though he holds in disrepute the people to whom the prophet belongs, and disliked to award to them honor in any respect, to the disparagement of his own people. But when a man feels himself loathsome and dying, minor considerations yield to the one great object of health and life. This is all natural, as it regards the life that now is. We feel no surprise in read-

ing the history of such a course, for the regaining of bodily health. But how strangely different is the conduct of mankind generally, in regard to the life of their souls. They are assured on the most credible of all authority, that there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there. The joyful intelligence has been sounded abroad by ambassadors commissioned for the purpose. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Whosoever will let him come, and take of the waters of life freely." Information of the Savior's ability, as well as his willingness is given, that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. This is sustained by ten thousands of experimental facts attesting its truth in every age, without the counter report of a single failure of one fair and actual trial; yet, how many are disposed to hesitate, to doubt its truth, to cherish their diseases, and risk the consequences of a fatal termination. Why this disproportionate concern between the life that now is, and of that which is to come? Why this prompt regard for the body, and this procrastination about the soul? Why this wakeful interest about time, and this apathy about eternity? Why this ready compliance with the first and slightest intimations of a bodily remedy, while all the array of motives which heaven, earth and hell can furnish, fail to excite the sinner to flee from the wrath to come? Should you make the honest effort, and fail, you will have this to console you, that you at least tried to be saved; but to sink to wo, without one laborious effort to avoid it, must forever add fuel to the flame of a condemning conscience, and give teeth to the worm which never dies.

But persons may seem to commence a compliance

with the intimations of the Gospel, and for want of obeying every specific direction, may fail, and lose both their previous labor and the object in view. Naaman did well in undertaking the journey, and coming to the prophet of Israel. But when he received his direction, he was unwilling to obey, and had it not been for his servants, would have missed a cure and remained in his leprosy. This was owing to his pride of feeling; and to the fact that he had prescribed in his own mind, the manner in which the cure should be effected. Though suffering severely by affliction, he was not humbled by it. He would be cured in his own way, or not at all. So it is often in using the means of salvation. Impressed, in some measure, with the danger of their sinful condition, and the importance of salvation, they employ some of the means of grace, but with a heart not sufficiently humbled. Like Naaman in applying to the humble prophet of Israel, they feel that from their lofty independence, it is a matter of condescension to feel any anxiety on the subject, and that the terms of salvation ought to be accommodated to them. It is not sufficiently realized that all the benefit is to be done to them. Because God and his people manifest concern for their salvation, they seem to feel that it would be conferring a favor upon others, for them to submit to the terms of the Gospel, and therefore a compromise of the exact conditions is expected; but the terms of salvation being immoveably fixed, this expectation cannot be gratified. Thus the applicant fails of a spiritual cure. The interest Naaman had in a cure was personal—in a relief from loathsomeness and pain, and the enjoyment of a comfortable life; to others it was only relative. So



salvation is of importance, especially to the sinner himself. While others should be anxious, he should agonize to enter in at the strait gate. If others in harmony with the feeling of the Savior, weep in sympathy for his condition, his heart should be broken in penitence, and he should be willing to make any sacrifice to accomplish the object.

Another obstacle in the way of the sinner's salvation is, he prescribes to himself the way in which the work is to be performed. He has pictured to himself what the feelings are which accompany the experience of religion; and he will be satisfied with nothing else than the filling up of the picture. His distress, in view of a sinful life, must be of such intensity, and duration, or he will not be satisfied with its reality, or he must obtain the object in the use of such means as he himself prescribes, and accompanied with such forms as he may like best to adopt. But how unreasonable, for the patient delirious and perishing by disease, to prescribe to his physician the means of his cure, a submission to which, he will make the condition of his living. How unreasonable, for the criminal under sentence of death, to dictate to his judge the manner in which his pardon shall be given to him, and make this the condition of accepting it. And even much more unreasonable is the conduct of him who prescribes to himself the way he will be saved, and how far he will conform to the requirements of the Gospel. Nor is it strange, if this be his course, that he should fail of the object. What he omits, may be much more important than what he does, and for want of this, every thing else is useless. But little avail for Naaman, to hear the prophet's direction, and refuse to go to Jordan. But little use to hear the invita-

tion of the Savior, "Come unto me," if you refuse to believe on him to salvation. Neither will it do to substitute one thing in the place of another: for you to go to the rivers of Damascus, if you are directed to wash in the waters of Canaan. A third obstacle to the natural mind in the way of success, is the simplicity of the terms of salvation. Something great and ostentatious is expected. Means are looked for which have a visible efficacy in themselves. Hence the origin of the diversified forms of visible religion in the world. Man naturally clings to a sensitive religion. To forms which can be seen, and handled, and impress the external senses, rather than simple truth, and the invisible principle of faith. A religion is wanted which can be seen in the gaudy show of its external drapery, rather than in a meek and quiet spirit, which is the adorning of the mind. Parphar and Abana, the golden streams of Damascus, are better than the muddy waters of Jordan. In this feeling, idolatry in all its forms originated. An invisible God was too refined an object to be seen by carnal eyes; a visible object must at least be his emblem. He was too remote for man to approach him, and a departed saint must be made a stepping-stone to the invisible throne. A glorified Savior was too sublimated an idea for the sanctification of his followers; he must be substantiated in the bread of the Sacrament, and his propitiation be made more accessible by the sacrifice of the mass. Penance being more visible, and crucifying to the flesh than repentance, is adopted in its place. A journey to Rome or to Juggernaut requiring more bodily labor, is preferred to approaching the cross by faith; and the water of baptism is made more account of than the thing signified by it. The

religion of sense, and the religion of faith have ever been opposing powers, and the conflict between them on the external platform of the church, seems now to be reviving, and the testimony to faith may again have to be born by the blood of martyrs. The one of these is the choice of man; the other is the appointment of God, and like the other arrangements of God, its simplicity recommends it, and proves its origin.

In defiance of his inability, and of all that God has said on the subject, man will be trying to make his way to heaven by the merit of works. Until his last resource fails him, he will endeavor to purify himself in his own silver streams, rather than go as he is, to the fountain opened in the house of David for washing away sin and uncleanness. But to this simple remedy he must come if he would be healed. Naaman at last complied with the prophet's direction, washed in Jordan, and returned renovated, both in body and in soul. His idolatry is broken up forever, and the God of Israel becomes his God. Thus it will be with every sinner who applies properly to the Gospel remedy; and thus, too, the most effectual way for the doubting to be satisfied of the reality of religion, is to yield themselves to its healing influences, and obey its requirements.

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#### REMARKS.

First, That every one, however obscure his situation in life, may be instrumental in saving others. The little maid and Naaman's servants were the necessary and honored instruments in this case, as well as the prophet. Let no one, then, excuse himself from exerting his influence, because he is not a prophet.

Second, If reason would not prevent salvation, she must be content to follow faith, though it should be in the dark. Faith can walk in a darkness where reason is blindfolded: reason is the servant of faith, and not her master. Let faith do her proper office, and thou shalt be saved.



## LECTURE XXVIII.

### THE EVIL OF COVETOUSNESS.

"And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants, and they bare them before him."

"The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed forever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."—2 KINGS 5: 23, 27.

Complying with the prophet's direction had availed more to Naaman than he expected. He had little faith in the prescribed remedy, but through the entreaty of his servants he finally concluded to employ it. He thought, perhaps, if it did no good, it would do no harm, and he could lose no more than his labor; but the success, so much beyond his faith, was as surprising as it was agreeable, and the change of his mind was as sudden and as great, as the change on his body. The power that could cure him of a disease which was beyond the reach of human skill, he at once concluded must be divine, and the God that could effect it, be different and superior to the gods of his nation, and had the sole right to his love and devotion. Thus the miracle effecting the material system, is made the means of effecting the immaterial mind; and the healing of the body, the occasion of healing the soul. To this result, the simplicity, and apparent inefficiency of the means prescribed contributed. The very reason which disinclined him at first to submit to the prescription, inclined him at

the last to believe in the supernatural nature of it. He could see no natural efficiency in the means; he was therefore the more ready to conclude that the efficiency which accompanied the use of them was more than natural. Had it been otherwise, and reason could have discovered a natural fitness in the means to produce such a result, he would have attributed the effect to the means themselves, and not to the power above them. Thus, the cure instead of producing and strengthening his faith, would have been regarded as only extending his knowledge of the power and adaptation of natural causes, rather than of establishing him in the belief of the everywhere-present Jehovah, and the divine origin of that religion, of which Elisha was a minister. The weakness of the instrument employed, leads to the conviction that a power beyond it, accompanies it, and makes it efficacious. In this way, the wisdom of God is often to be seen in the movements of his providence, and especially in the means of his grace. By this, it is seen how their very weakness becomes their strength, and their want of inherent efficiency, makes them the more the hand-maids of faith; and is an illustration of the sentiment, that he has put these treasures in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. Slight as the connection often appears between the means and the end in the matters of salvation, we are too much disposed to rely upon them. How much more would we err in this respect, if the efficacy was more visible and striking. If we are now inclined to rely on the form and shadow, more than on him who gives it substance. If the word, and the water, and the sacrament, and the administrator are now

depended upon for success, on the ground of their own efficacy, what would it be if this efficacy could be more distinctly seen? As it is, the connection is sufficiently intimate, if properly regarded, to secure an attendance on the means, and lead us to use the instruments which appear to be connected with the end, and sufficiently disconnected, to secure a full reliance on God. Enough of necessity for the use of the means is seen, to call into vigorous exercise all our activity, and lead us to love, and be grateful for the instrument; and enough of weakness is seen in them, to lead us to depend on grace, and to give the praise of all our salvation to God—to induce us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and to believe that it is “God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Naaman not only returns with the honest avowal, that Jehovah is the only God, and that henceforth he shall receive his only worship, but, also, with grateful gifts to the prophet, who had been the instrument of guiding his footsteps in the way of peace. Let all learn thoroughly, (what none learn sufficiently,) to work as if all depended on works, and to depend on God as if works were nothing. This is the secret of religion in its beginning, and its progress. This secret is with all the righteous, but the unfolding of the covenant shews them more of it.

But, how differently the same events of providence, and the same external manifestations of grace effect different individuals. The miracle of healing, which breaks up the idolatry of Naaman, is the occasion of cherishing the covetousness of Gehazi. That which subdues the selfishness of the one, is an occasion of strengthening the selfishness of the other.

The event which makes one a cheerful giver, becomes to the other the occasion of taking what is not his own.

How different, too, the conduct and character of the individuals from what we would expect. The General of the Syrian army, a heathen worshiper, espouses the true God, and manifests christian affection, while the servant of the true prophet, and the professor of the true religion acts unworthy of the heathen religion, and proves himself a hypocrite. How often do persons badly answer the expectations which are excited by the privileges which they have had. Gehazi had lived with, and attended one distinguished for wisdom, piety, and influence. He had often heard his pious counsels, witnessed his godly example, and seen his miracles, but does not form his character after the model which stands so near him. He sees his master's example in not setting his affections on things on the earth; but covetousness is too deeply rooted in his soul to remain always without a disgraceful manifestation. Being planted in the courts of the Lord, does not always secure fruitfulness to old age. Some roots of bitterness will spring up to trouble the pious, and be stumblingblocks to those that are without. Some tares will be among the wheat, and stand near to it, until the harvest come. Some characters will be seen in the world, more to be admired than some in the church, of whom it might be desirable they should change places; the one being better than his professed society, and the other worse: still the defective specimens do not prove that there is nothing genuine—on the contrary, counterfeit bills prove that there is a chartered institution. Though some may have the best



privileges and misimprove them, it does not prove that others, even less favored, may not shew better fruits. Naaman, a stranger, is more profited by one interview with Elisha, than Gehazi is by daily familiarity. The best men have often had those near them, and in their households, who have been a trial to them. The father has had to entreat, and say, "My son, if thou wilt be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine;" and not being regarded, his gray hairs have been brought down with sorrow to the grave. The mother has had to expostulate, "What my son, and the son of my vows?" and to see the hard heart remain unsubdued by her tears. Ministers have had to be grieved for the members of their charge, and in view of years of fruitless labor, so far as such are concerned, to say, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught." The only advance made by some, is to obtain religion enough to keep them from being religious. They are christians just enough to keep them from doing the peculiar works of christians, and at the same time to keep them from applying to themselves the woes pronounced against the wicked. Such are among the most unchangeable things in nature. They are as certainly in the church on the Sabbath, as they are in the world during the week; but their tempers, their self-will, their charity, their zeal, their general devotedness, (graduated by the lowest scale that will admit of their being christians at all,) remain on the low ground, where they did years ago. Nor is it strange, if there is no advancement, that at last there should be a visible retrocession; that the principles of some kind, which must be gathering strength, will at last break over the barriers which a heartless profession

has placed around them, and it be seen in full manifestation, what was always there—a heart under the influence of its native passions, and under the government of the principles of the world. Nor is it more, in such a case, than might be expected, that, like Gehazi, he should go upon the credit of his professed master, to effect a purpose which he could not effect on his own; and make his relation to religion itself, a help to gain some sinister purpose. But the exposure and condemnation of hypocrisy and deception, will come, sooner or later. Though man should never be able to detect it, it will be exposed at last, when the Lord shall say, “Depart, I never knew you.” What a fearful reverse awaits us, if we are acting a part to gain a sinister purpose, in our religious transactions. Look at Gehazi, and fear. But a little before you see him so much in the confidence of his master, as to be sent as his substitute to raise the dead son of the Shunamite; just now you see him carrying with him so much relative dignity, that the prime minister of the Syrian State alights from his chariot to learn his wishes; and in view of the honor and profit which were now so bountifully lavished upon him, it is not strange that he should say, “All is well.” But the eye of God is upon him, and the eye of the seer is upon him, and his dark deed of robbery and deception, artfully managed as it was, is seen; the charge is preferred, and though it is denied, it is proved by him who, for the time, acts in place of God, as witness, judge, and executioner. He is declared guilty. The punishment is pronounced, and no sooner pronounced than executed; and the leprosy of Naaman cleaved to him, and to his seed, in their generations, and he went out from his pres-

ence a leper white as snow. What an inheritance this, with his ill-gotten treasure. Who would take his seven hundred pounds sterling, and this entail along with it? Who would not have preferred to have remained in his humble, but honorable station, rather than to have olive-yards, and sheep, and oxen, and a withering curse upon him? But they that will be rich, whether it be by right or by wrong, whether by taking more than their own, or by keeping what they should give away, fall into "many foolish and hurtfull lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

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#### REMARKS.

In view of the case the following principles are suggested:

First, The evil of covetousness.

This has been termed the selfishness of the purse. It seeks worldly prosperity, and knows nothing equal to that. The cause of Christ itself must wait on this, and be secondary to it. This, which has always been the sin of the world, has also been the sin of the church. This form of self, is Dives in the mansion, clothed in purple, and faring sumptuously every day. The cause of Christ is Lazarus lying at his gate, and fed only with the crumbs which fall from his table. This often makes an assembly of professing christians a congregation of useless men, assembling merely for their own religious purposes, and separating to pursue their own worldly ends, as regardless of the welfare of others as if none but themselves inhabited the earth. The scripture is particular in the description and condemnation of this sin. It appears to have been the principal element in the first transgression. It

began in an inordinate desire for an object, of which God had said, Thou shalt not covet. In the instance of Achan, it was the first sin of the Israelites under the new dispensation in Canaan, brought defeat on the arms of Israel, and triumph to their foes. It was the first sin marked by the vengeance of heaven, which interrupted the joy, and stained the glory of the present dispensation—Ananias and Sapphira kept back part of the price, and became the monuments of selfishness. The scriptural classification of this, shews its aggravated nature. It stands associated with all the principal sins. “From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness. I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.” As we know a man by the company he keeps; so we may judge of this sin by the classification in which it is placed. If these other vices exclude from the kingdom of heaven, covetousness will do it as effectually, or the terms of admission are not correctly stated by inspiration. If the drunkard, and the adulterer, are not to be the objects of respectable association, or to be ate with as christian brethren; so neither is the covetous, by the decision of the same authority. But is this according to the common feeling of society, or of the church? This would be introducing a new standard of reputation—a new test of church membership. Though it has stood on the church’s statute book from the beginning, it has never been transferred to her practical lessons.



And what does this prove? Only the universality of the crime, and its consequent reputation. When the mass are involved in the same crime, none will be condemned, or held in disrepute. What would be thought of any community where fornication and murder are as reputable as covetousness is in the best christian society; yet who is alarmed for society when covetousness prevails? What is common, is not looked upon as singular; and what is popular with the majority, will not be likely to be condemned by any—the excess only will be noticed at all.

Second, The intimate connection there is between different sins, and between sin and its punishment.

Gehazi first indulges an improper desire for property; then he profanely binds himself by an oath to obtain it, which is carried out by repeated falsehood and deception. Such is the support one sin gives to another, and the intimate connection between them; and then, when sin is finished, it bringeth forth death.

Third, We see, in the case of Gehazi, strong reason for right conduct in parents.

Their acts will not only affect themselves, but their posterity. The dispensation has not yet expired, when God will visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, and shew mercy to thousands of generations of them that love him, and keep his commandments. There is a double reason for watchfulness, when your conduct will affect the character and happiness of unborn generations.

Covetousness appears to be the prevailing sin of the American people. One reason probably for this is, the means of wealth are more generally

within the reach of all classes of society. It is not only an ever-goading stimulous to the general mind, but also drives legislation over God's moral law; it desecrates holy time by public law; it rattles upon our highways, and smokes upon our canals, and navigable waters, when God says, "Remember the Sabbath day;" and the best means of making gain becomes the governing motive in the selection of men for public stations; and for the same reason our fellow-men are often held in perpetual bondage. If a curse for the sins of the present generation shall fall upon posterity, what may be expected for time to come? Shall not God visit such a nation as this, of whom it is said, he abhoreth the covetous?

## LECTURE XXIX.

### THE SWIMMING AXE, OR WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GOOD EDUCATION.

"So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe-head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim."—2 KINGS 6: 4—6.

The business of Elisha not only led him to instruct the people generally, and to admonish kings, but also to superintend the public schools. He was aware how much the public good depended on these, and therefore thought them worthy of a considerable portion of his attention. Though it was an age of inspiration, in the view of such men, that did not supercede the necessity of affording the best advantages for education. And education is undervalued only by those who know little of its worth.

The narrative in this case shews us a fact, which is still to be noticed in the general state of society, that public schools were but poorly patronized by state authority, or the contributions of the rich. Especially is this true, so far as those designed for the ministry are concerned. The college over which Elisha presided does not appear to have had any invested funds. When by the increase of numbers, they needed an enlargement of their buildings, the students themselves had to go to the woods of Jordan to prepare the timber for the

work, which, when executed by their hands, would not be likely to be done in any very great style of elegance.

It shews us, also, another fact, which is still to be noticed, as common, that most of those who are disposed to pursue a course of education with reference to the sacred office, are of the poorer classes of society. These were not only too poor to pay for the work, but also to purchase tools to do it with. Even the axe is borrowed, and it was well that there was a manifestation of this much of charity on the part of the owner, as to lend it, a favor which would not always be showed to students.

But, as might be expected of those engaged in literary pursuits, the borrower of the mechanic's tools does not know very well how to take care of them, or use them. Soon his axe is at the bottom of Jordan, and he is left with the handle only in his hand. Though poor, he was honest, and this is the more apparent from the fact, that he was the more concerned for it because it was not his own. But, by the help of Elisha, the lost axe is regained. The sign employed, is a stick thrown over the place, and the iron is made to swim. It is easy for him who established the laws of nature to counteract them, when his wisdom directs to such an exercise of power.

What I design in further remarks, is to state certain principles which should be considered in the pursuits of education.

*To Educate, according to its etymology, means to draw out.*

This drawing forth, may apply either to the mind itself, or to the stores of knowledge which lie in nature around us, concealed from a careless and



inattentive view. The mind, like most other things in nature, acquires strength and maturity by cultivation, and a gradual process. Its faculties, left to themselves, like the laws of nature in the uncultivated forest, give proof of existence and life; but, it is the rude, wild and forbidding life of the wilderness. These are the wild blossoms and fruit, under an exuberant overgrowth, which, if transplanted to the husbandman's orchard, or the horticulturist's garden, would attract admiration, and regale the taste of the visitor. The mind is not to be brought to maturity by a sudden process, or at once. Like the other more useful things of nature, it approaches perfection by slow advances. The more useful things are, the more slowly are they generally in coming to maturity. The great oak which is to make the walls of an edifice, is ages in growing; and the pine which is to adorn the dwelling places of men, has stood on the mountain side, and resisted the storm for generations. The May-apple in a few days acquires its full size, but the apple-tree, whose fruit is designed for the nourishment, as well as the pleasure of man, requires years to mature it. So, if the mind is to be beautiful, and fruitful as the fruit tree, it must not only be brought under the influence of cultivation, but be cultivated perseveringly. A student just from college said, in the presence of Dr. Rush, "I have completed my studies." To whom the Dr. replied, "You must be a happy young man indeed, to have finished your studies so soon. I have been pursuing mine all my life, and have not yet finished them." That the diamond may change the elements, which it has in common with the charcoal, into its present sparkling riches, a process of ages

is necessary. Most are endowed with the materials of usefulness, and some of greatness; but neither the one nor the other will be gained, without a patient, and even painful application of the powers we have. Without this, the natural fragrance will waste itself upon a desert air. If a little learning will make a man wise in his own conceit, much more will make him think he knows but little. This led the poet to say,

“A little learning is a dangerous thing.

Drink deep, or taste not the Pyrian spring.”

But, in order that education answer the name, and fulfill the whole design, it should be thorough, not only in one department of the mind, but in all. Man is not only an intellectual, but also a moral and religious being. It is necessary that his intellectual powers be strengthened, to make him a being of thought and comprehension—that the understanding be expanded, to contemplate itself, and understand the nature and relations of things in the boundless field of nature around us; but mere intellectual strength may exist apart from an amiable or useful life. The mind may be strengthened to understand and admire the mechanism of nature, and the wonderful adaptation of her physical laws, without understanding, or admiring her moral laws—may prove the power of numbers, and demonstrate the relations of quantity—may soar with delight above the flight of ordinary minds, and investigate the operations of nature in the remote regions of the universe; and may, at the same time, dislike to contemplate the still more important relations it sustains to its fellow-men, and its God—may be pleased with the movements of things temporal, while it is displeased with the

movements of things eternal. Hence, the importance of moral and religious culture.

However important mere intellectual training is, it alone will not qualify man for exerting his influence most beneficially upon his fellow-men. And the acquisition of intellectual strength merely, under the influence of a perverted moral nature, may make its possessor more powerfully and decidedly pernicious. The heart is the impulsive power for good, or for evil: this is the main-spring of man's movements as an individual, or as a nation. Even intellectual strength yields to the more powerful impulses of passion. Intellectual power may be carried to its highest advancement, and make its possessor only more a fiend. Cultivate intellect alone, and genius may shine by it, and attract admirers, and inspire veneration; but, that very cultivated genius may, and probably will, employ its advantageous power to undermine and overthrow the principles of moral order—the basis on which society rests. If Newton, by the enlargement of his mental powers, and his comprehension of the laws which govern the worlds of matter, by this circumstance, could have had his natural power so increased, that he could have slightly deranged the motion of the heavenly bodies, what unbounded confusion would have been the result in the whole solar and stellary systems. But here human power, however the will may be, is impotent. But it is not so in the moral kingdom. Here man has influence, and an influence, too, which often tells with fearful results on the order of society, and the destinies of man. When the intellect alone is cultivated in such men as Hume, Voltaire, or Byron, and left to exert itself under the influence of a corrupted heart,

it puts forth its hand, with fearful daring, to stop the order of God's moral government; and has been too often successful, as it was in the case of France, of driving a nation to the verge of ruin, or into the whirlpool of destruction.

The past experience of mankind, attested by all history, proves that no system of education in which moral principle is neglected, and the heart uncultivated, will sustain a community in happiness and prosperity. Mere science may be lauded to the skies; but she will return to the earth, clip of her wings, and proclaim to her votaries her inability, unaided by heaven's moral laws, to conduct man safely over the billows of passion, and the tempests of conflicting selfish interest.

Let, then, the principles of the Bible never be excluded from the youth of this nation; let them have the Bible from the earliest dawn of their mental powers, to their highest and latest advancement; let them imbibe its principles by the domestic fireside, in the common school, the high school, and the college, until its holy influence shall pervade all hearts, and all classes of community. And then, and not till then, may we hope to see the full benefit of education, and a prosperous community. Then might we hope to see less occasion for the infliction of the penalty of law, and a pleasing calm settling upon the agitated ocean of political party strife, and an inquiry be made for the order of God's moral government in managing the affairs of nations.

But, let the infidel effort, now so impiously made to exclude the Bible from the instruction of the young, succeed, and atheism will again set up a prostitute as the goddess of reason, and Rome pro-



claim a jubilee at the downfall of American liberty, and the nation learn, when it is too late, that the Bible is the Book of man, not only for eternity, but also for time; not only as an individual, but also as a social being; not only in his private, but public relations.

It was not without the best reasons, that Ex-President Adams, in his counsel lately given to the young men of Baltimore, with reference to the books proper for a public library, begins with the Bible.

In the country generally of late, more attention than formerly is directed to female education in public schools. And it may be asked, whether this feature of the times should be regarded as auspicious? It is a fact that will not be disputed, that female character is capable of exerting a mighty influence in the formation of human character, and in controlling the events of society. This influence, always considerable, is most powerful in civilized society. Even barbarous nations have had their heroines, and princesses, to whom the obsequious multitude have bowed in submission. But it is not when woman stands forth in some place of prominence, or is raised by the popular voice, or by hereditary claim to the throne of power, that her influence is most universally, or effectually exerted; but in her place of retirement, filling the appropriate sphere which providence has assigned her, even here she exerts an influence over all ranks and conditions of life. It was in the retirement of the bowers of Eden, that she began to make the other sex feel the weight of her persuasive influence. It was there, too, she exerted her power over the best of men, with the most disastrous effect, and the

whole race has felt the weight of her perverted influence in that transaction.

But besides the influence she exerts on the minds of the mature, to her, in an important sense, is committed the moulding of the human character at the period when it is most susceptible. Though retirement is her natural place, she has often come forth to public notice, and graced the pages of composition with the effusions of her literary taste. Who can read the song of Miriam, of Deborah, and of Hannah, without confessing that sublime, and poetic genius is not confined to one sex? And who can read the productions of uninspired pens, such as Hannah Moore's, tasteful in composition, as well as rich in thought, without feeling that the female mind, under proper influence, may bless the world? But it may be objected, that the extending of this advantage in any considerable degree, will result in too much self-respect, and a diminution of that active industry, which is essential both to health and comfort. But why should this result be feared from education, more, or even so much, as from wealth? Surely there is no necessary connection between an improved mind and idle habits. Industry and economy are not inseparably connected with barbarian ignorance. The study of philosophy does not necessarily lead to dress and equipage. Because a young lady becomes familiar with chemistry, the science of affinities, it does not follow that she must be ignorant of those affinities which make food healthful, and dishes agreeable; or exclude herself from the apartment where the combining processes are carried on. Because she extends her knowledge of the world, it does not follow that she must have less knowledge of that

little world in which her creator has made her a queen. Because she improves her knowledge of the universe, she is not by this the more disqualified to arrange her household in order; and, because she acquires a knowledge of the science of mind, it does not follow that she would be less qualified to teach the young idea how to shoot, or to shed comfort and entertainment through the domestic circle.

We are no advocate for a merely ornamental education. Neither man nor woman was made for mere ornament, but for usefulness. An education which contributes nothing to this, is of little use. We believe in the Spartan maxim, that mankind ought to be educated while young, for that which they have to do when they get older. Whatever fits them best for this, is the best education. We say then, if education leads to idleness and vanity, it is defective some where, and if such is the result, it is more the fault of the parent, than the school; and the best way, perhaps, to correct the evil would be, to make good education more general, then the distinction it produces would be less apparent.

Such is an outline of a proper education. The training of the intellectual powers, qualifies an individual to investigate and comprehend the truth, to be associated with men of improved minds, and to influence the minds of others for good. The education of the moral powers prepares us to understand our moral relations, and to do the duties of good and honest citizens. The education of the physical powers in a becoming and useful industry, prepares for a comfortable life; and education religiously adds an adorning to all, and principle to all, and prepares for an honorable citizenship in the

kingdom of heaven, and to be an associate of angels.

"Happy is the nation whose sons are as plants grown up in their youth, whose daughters are as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."



## LECTURE XXX.

### THE SUN'S RECESSION.

“And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord; and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.”

2 KINGS 20: 9—11.

In the present world man only begins his existence. He comes forth like a flower, unfolding his hidden qualities, as under a vernal sun, attracts a momentary notice, then withers and dies. If revelation did not come to the aid of observation, we might well inquire, Hast thou made mankind in vain. “In the midst of life, we are in death.” No strength of constitution, no engagement of business, exempts from the stroke of this destroyer of earthly pursuits and hopes. The king and the statesman, involved in the business of the empire, and the most uninfluential of the subjects, are liable alike to be interrupted by disease, and to be cut short in their course by death. This event comes to most persons, perhaps, before they are prepared for it, and a little sooner than they expected. Many as the crosses and disappointments of life are, they are no more than what are necessary to induce us to prepare for another state, and make us willing to leave the present. In the midst of life, and engagements, Hezekiah is notified, not only by

alarming disease, but by the word of the prophet, to set his house in order, for he should die, and not live. Though a man of piety, and integrity of life, this information deeply affects him, and he betakes himself to prayer, the common expedient of the christian in the time of trouble. It has been objected against the character of Hezekiah, and the beneficial supports of christian principle, that he should have been so much disturbed at the thoughts of his dissolution. It has been said, it does not set the saint, and the hero, and the advantages which accrue from a religious life, in a favorable light. The love of life, however, is natural to us, and in our very constitution is implanted the fear of death, The fear of it is instinctive, not only in man, but in the animal creation, and exists, apart from a view of the consequences beyond. But there were other circumstances which operated on the mind of this pious king, at this particular time, which made him desirous to live. He was only thirty-nine years old, and therefore in the midst of life and influence. He had as yet no son to succeed him in the government, and, therefore, the succession of the kings was likely to be thrown out of the immediate line of David's descendants, and all the hopes of having the Messiah born of his race, to become abortive. The Assyrians, too, were preparing to invade his kingdom, and the reformation of religion which he had successfully commenced, he had reason to fear, would be reversed, if he ceased to direct its progress. So that, besides the natural aversion which all men have to death, he had strong reasons to be concerned at its approach, and to desire a prolongation of his life. He saw the storm that was gathering, and threatening his country with desola-

tion, and that all things were in danger of running into anarchy and confusion. That he should melt in tears, in the view of such an apprehension, may be supposed, without referring it to his natural love of life, or unbecoming fear of death. It is not strange, that generous and patriotic minds should desire to live for the good of their country; that those imbued with the spirit of christian philanthropy should desire to live for the good of the church; or, that the affectionate parent should desire more days to establish his house, and instruct his children. Paul, though desirous to depart, so far as himself was concerned, and be with Christ, which he regarded as far better, for the good of others thought it needful, and was reconciled to remain.

But, the most threatening symptoms are often averted, and after having been made to possess days of weariness and months of vanity, after having been brought down to the gates of death, the sufferer is often restored to life, and years of health and prosperity are added beyond his hope. Such events are not without their use ever afterwards in the christian's improved experience. One of God's distinguished servants said he had learned more by one week's affliction, than he had by a life of health beside. Dr. Owen said, "That it was another thing to come to God through a Mediator, than what many, who use the expression, are aware of. I myself," says he, "preached some years, when I had but very little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ, until the Lord was pleased to visit me with sore affliction, by which I was brought to the mouth of the grave, and under which my soul was oppressed with hor-

ror and darkness. But God graciously relieved my spirit, by a powerful application of psalm 130: 4—‘There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,’ from whence I received special instruction, peace, and comfort, in drawing near to God, through the Mediator, and I preached on it immediately after my recovery.” This he afterwards expanded into a volume, which has lately been issued by the American Tract Society. This will, no doubt, find its way into thousands of families in these States, and may be blessed in directing many souls in their approach to God. Such is the reach of purpose which God often has, in what may seem the smallest incidents of life. Thus, Owen’s sickness in England, is made a blessing, not only to himself, but also in this distant country, ages after his death: so intimately are small and great, near and remote events connected in the plan of providence.

Hezekiah desired to live, that he might do good, go up to the house of the Lord, and show forth his praise. Aside from this, there is no other object worthy of a strong desire to live. And wholly apart from this purpose, no one can honestly ask God to spare his life, or restore his health. In the full view of a design to devote his prolonged life to the exclusive pursuits of selfishness, and sinful gratification, no one can consistently plead with his Maker for life. The import of such a prayer would be, Spare me, O Lord, that I may break thy laws, offend thee, and injure thy cause. Yet, how many such prayers have been offered in affliction. Persons in affliction usually think of accompanying their prayer for life with the promise of better doing, which shews their practical judgment of the



justice of God to be, that they should be cut off, if they are disposed to continue in willful sin.

But, when that which we value much more is concerned, we wish to have the best evidence to satisfy us. Though a promise is often more than we expected, we desire a sign to confirm it. Hezekiah despairs of life, and prays. The Lord hears, and sends the prophet to assure him that his prayer is heard. He then asks for a sign to confirm his word, and the most unlikely one is given.

Who would think that the sun would alter his course to gratify the feelings of an individual? How wonderful the condescension of God, thus to gratify the feelings, and answer the prayer of a man. But doubtless higher ends were to be answered by it, than individual gratification. It was designed immediately to give assurance of two things. 1. The prolonging of the king's life for a given period, because public utility required it; and 2. That the formidable preparations of the Assyrian king should be disappointed, and the church be preserved against the violence of her enemies. Its more remote intention was, to be a standing memorial of God's regard for his people, and the interest which he takes in the preservation of his church, as well as a perpetual proof of his unlimited control over the universe of matter and mind.

As to the manner in which this appearance of the sun's recession took place, two opinions have been adopted.

One, that the whole miracle was wrought upon the dial, and was occasioned only, by the reversing of the sun's beams, while the sun proceeded in its ordinary course—that the shadow was put back on the sun dial by a refraction of the sun's rays, without

any interruption of the course of nature. If it were otherwise, the effect would have been felt over the world, and been recorded in the writings of subsequent historians, as well as the sun's standing still in the time of Joshua; which is said not to be the case. Besides, it is said, so prodigious a miracle, as to make an alteration in the whole fabric of the universe, was unnecessary, when the bare refraction of the sun's rays upon the dial plate would answer the end as well.

The other opinion is, that the description is to be understood literally; and that whatever apparent danger there might be of shocking, and unhinging the whole frame of nature, by such a sudden reverse motion of the sun, or earth, could be easily guarded against by the Creator, in whose hand the whole mechanism of nature is, as a machine in the hand of a human artificer, to make it go faster or slower, backward or forward, at his pleasure; and that philosophy should conform to revelation, rather than revelation to philosophy, especially if the expressions of Scripture are in any measure clear, as it is supposed to be in this case. No one has ever explored but a small part of the secrets of nature, and, therefore, the wisest are very incompetent to decide what are the possible changes which may take place; and arguments from our ignorance badly apply against recorded matters of experience and observation.

Though there is an appointed time for man upon earth, and it is "appointed unto all men once to die," Hezekiah is the only one who knew so long before hand when that time should come. This universal secrecy in reference to this deeply interesting event, in which every one is concerned, is doubtless

an arrangement of wisdom and kindness. The definite knowledge of this fact would be accompanied with a deeply seated, and wide spread melancholy, or with a more reckless profligacy, saying, "Let us eat, and drink, for to-morrow we die." Its influence, both upon the righteous and the wicked, would be less beneficial than the present impenetrable secrecy, which conceals this event from our view. As it is, we know not the day, nor the hour, when the Son of man cometh, and therefore there is always need to watch and pray. The event is among the most certain of all things, and yet, as to the time of its occurrence, the most uncertain. Hence, the propriety of the command, "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." The motive then, of the deluded Millerite is as wrong as his calculations, that fixing the definite time will induce man more readily to prepare for it. Like all other schemes, in which men pretend to be wiser than revelation, and attempt to improve upon God's arrangements, its result can be evil only. This is already seen in the phrenzy of some, and the infidelity of others.

But, because God has reserved the times and the seasons in his own power, and concealed many things from human research, we are not to infer that he has no definite purpose respecting them. Because fifteen years are said to be added to this king's life, it is taken by some as a proof, that God governs the affairs of men without any fixed or definite purpose. Some things in Scripture are spoken with an implied condition. The occurrence of this may seem to us to alter the original plan, because we see only one part of it at once; while with God, the different steps are only the several

parts of the same plan. Hezekiah's disease, no doubt, was such as, according to the natural course of things, would terminate his life; and it was probably according to this view the announcement of his death was made to him; but by the intervention of ordinary, and extraordinary means, which were at first parts of the unrevealed plan, his life was preserved. Thus, the purpose of God, which says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell," is not changed when it says, "He that believeth shall be saved." Something has occurred, which changes the character and circumstances of the individual. God, too, may have an agency in producing this change, without subjecting himself to the charge of fickleness. The purpose which invested the disease with such power as, not counteracted, would take away the life of the king of Judah, was not inconsistent with another purpose, to accompany the lump of figs with such efficacy, as to enable him to go up to the house of the Lord the third day. The means may be a part of the purpose, as well as the end.

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#### REMARKS.

First, We may learn to trust the power and faithfulness of God. If it be necessary for the protection of his cause, or the comfort of an individual, the most distant part of the universe can be made to contribute its aid—the sun will retrace her path, and the stars help in their courses.

Second, That prayer is an important means of enlisting this aid in our behalf.

Third, That it is the part of wisdom to set and keep your house in order, since death is at the door, and may at any time enter. This will not induce



him to come any sooner. Hezekiah's prayers did not hasten, but deferred his approach. The fig-tree was spared, only with the hope, that it might be fruitful.

Fourth, However holy may be the life of the christian, when he comes to die, he feels his need of additional strength to his faith.

## LECTURE XXXI.

### THE HEROISM OF FAITH—ILLUSTRATED BY THE THREE CHILDREN OF THE CAPTIVITY.

“He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the fourth is like the son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzear came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Sadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire.”—DANIEL 3: 25, 26.

We have followed the Jewish nation through a period of about nine hundred years of its history, and noticed the most important miraculous events connected with it. We have seen it emerging from its obscurity in the oppression of Egypt, and its wonderful migration to the land of promise. We have seen the hand of God making a way in the sea, and a path in the desert, and heard his voice giving them law from Horeb, and settling their political constitution. We have, with interest, followed them across the Jordan, and noticed the happy effect of their ecclesiastical organization whenever they conformed to its requirements, the disastrous results which attended them when they departed from it, and God's frequent miraculous interposition in their behalf, notwithstanding their sins. We have heard also the expostulations of prophets, and seen miraculous agency by their hands, to impress the people still, that God was their Ruler, and their Judge. But what was true of man at first, was true of them: they abode not in honor. They kept the statutes of Omri, and all the works

of the house of Ahab, and walked in their counsels, and now God has made them a desolation, and their inhabitants an hissing, to bear the reproach of his people. The lion of the North has come forth from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles has been on his way, and the Lord hath covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud, and cast down from heaven the beauty of Israel; he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, destroyed his places of assembly, and caused the solemn feasts, and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in his indignation, the king and the priest. The daughter of Zion is fallen, and her young men sigh in a foreign bondage. Such is the feebleness of the best constitution, and the weakness of the best system of national law, when religious principle departs from the mass of the people, and integrity from the rulers.

But, while we must follow the chosen people in their dispersion among the heathen, it is pleasing to see some monuments of piety rising out of the ruins of this fallen greatness. While we see the crowns of Israel's kings, fallen and defiled in the dust, it is pleasing to see her obscure youth rising to distinction, and exerting an influence for good, over the millions of their conquerors. If we are compelled to mourn the departure of miraculous agency from the land of Israel, where only, so long it has been witnessed, it is pleasing to see it revived in Babylon, for the glory of God, and the confusion of idols.

Daniel and his three associate youth, were taken to Babylon in the first captivity of Judah. They were children of distinguished families; and what is more worthy of notice, to the praise of their parents, in a time of general declension, they ap-

pear to have been taught in their childhood the principles of true religion. This instruction, by the grace of God, took a firm hold of their minds, and became the regulating principles of their lives. Instances of a similar kind are not rare in the history of parental faithfulness, and encourage parents to sow the seed of Bible knowledge in the morning, and in the evening not withhold their hand; knowing who hath said, "their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people, and all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

These young men were exposed to temptations and influences, which it might be supposed none, in their circumstances, would successfully resist. They were away from the restraints of parents and friends, and even from the influence of the administration of the religion of their fathers. The temptations of sensual indulgence and intemperance, were presented and urged upon them. The motive of being respectable, by conforming to the habits of society around them, existed in all its force. They were placed as scholars under the influence of teachers of very different principles from what they had been taught at home; and to gain the good will of the king, and their patrons, according to the natural course of policy, they would have conformed their views and feelings to theirs. But amidst this tide of contrary influences, they stood immoveable. The king's requirement, his dainty meat, and his wine, were alike ineffectual to seduce them from the path of rectitude they had marked out for themselves. Pulse, and water, and a close application to useful learning, are preferred to the luxury and idleness of the court. God blessed them in carrying out their



good purpose, and they soon show, both in appearance of bodily health, and mental improvement, that they excel their fellows; they attract the notice of their superiors, and the king himself, by personal trial, is satisfied of their superior attainments, and resolves to prefer them above the sons of his own subjects, and to promote them to the places of power and trust. So true is it, even in this life, that they who honor God, he will honor; and the way to eminence, is the way of virtue.

But the elevation of office, and influence usually become more the occasions of the trial of integrity. It makes a man more the object of observation, and his acts a kind of common property, which often falls into the hands of those who are not careful how they use it. Some, too, who value themselves upon their superior claims to promotion, and who are left behind in the common level of society, envy the successful candidate; and when able to follow him in his advancement by nothing else, they will do it by ill-will and vituperation; and when they cannot climb the eminence, they will throw up the malignant darts of envy and misrepresentation; and when fault cannot be found with them for wrong doing, it will be for right doing; and if the character be impregnable on every other side, it will be assailed on the side of the law of his God.

Such a trial the three children were soon to have in their promotion, of the strength of their christian principle. The king of Babylon, for the show of his magnificence and vanity, made an enormous golden image, and required all his subjects to worship it. Several things might present themselves to the minds of these young men, as reasons why they should comply. There was *authority*. It was the

command of their sovereign, and good men are to be good subjects, to honor the king, and to obey magistrates. And it is not every one that discriminates between the claims of Cæsar and the claims of God: not every one that knows when he ought to subject himself to the charge of disloyalty, rather than obey his God. There was *obligation*. Nebuchadnezzar was not only their sovereign, but their benefactor. He had educated them in a generous manner, and advanced them to honorable stations; and no ties are so difficult to break, as those produced by kindness. There was universality of compliance; all besides obey; and who can dare to be singular? Why should they stand alone, and effect to be better than any one else? Strong as these motives were, they resisted them by principle; and in view of the burning furnace, said, "Our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us, but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Thus principle triumphs over earthly interest and human obligation, and they do not conform to the world.

But whose word shall prevail? Shall the king, or the subject do his pleasure? Shall it be said, in the realms of an Eastern monarch, that where the word of a king is, there is not power? Shall an example be countenanced that may spread disobedience through the empire? No. Let the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Let the strongest of the subjects be the executioners of the mandate, to throw these offenders into it. The order is obeyed; but the flame withers into death those who did it. But a wonder attracts the attention of the by-standers: they walk in the midst of

the furnace; and the king's amazement is excited by a fourth person in their company, with an appearance more than earthly, like unto the Son of God. They are called, and come forth from the midst of the glowing oven, unhurt by the fiery element. The king is impressed with their integrity; is convinced of the truth of their religion, and the God of Israel is proclaimed as the only true God, throughout the empire of Babylon, and they are promoted to higher offices. Such is God's regard for those that serve him from principle, and venture every thing for his honor; such his control over the elements of nature, when higher spiritual ends are to be answered; and such his ability to restrain the wrath of man, and cause the remainder thereof to praise him. Such, too, is the fulfillment of his promise to his children, that when they walk through the fire, it shall not kindle upon them, and through the waters, they shall not overflow them.

But, for some reason, Daniel is not subjected to this trial, and is not allowed to share the honor of glorifying God in the furnace, with his companions. He is permitted to live in peace, and be advanced to the chief place of power, and to be distinguished by superior wisdom, and piety, and influence, even to old age. But envy did not permit him to go down to the grave in peace. His devotion is noticed by his enemies, and a snare is laid for him: a scheme is devised to prevent him from prayer, or cause him to forfeit his life. He understands the import of the decree, and the certainty of the penalty. He knows the power of lions, and their thirst for blood; but his intercourse with God is not to be interrupted by such fears. He prays, as before, three times a day, with his window open towards Jerusalem, the

city of his fathers' solemnities, and the temple, the visible residence of the Shekinah. For this he is accused, and sentence, according to the unchangeable laws of the Medes and Persians, is executed, and he is cast into the den of lions. Here he spends the night unprotected, except by his God, whom he served; but this is sufficient. An angel is sent to be his companion in this lonely and dangerous abode. The lions' ferocity is tamed into the gentleness of the lamb, and he spends the solitary hours in prayer, and praise, and peace, and joy, while the lions felt the invisible restrainer; who said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." He comes forth at the king's request, the following morning, as after a night of sweet repose. The king then said, "I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end." Thus, by faith, they quenched the violence of fire, and stopped the mouths of lions; and thus miracles once more, and but once, become the demonstration of a God, and the heavenly origin of religion, till Jesus Christ himself should come, and by miracles wrought by his own power in proof of his Messiahship, give full evidence that he was the Savior of the world.

Egypt, Arabia, Canaan, and now Babylonia, have, in succession, been made the theatre of the displays of a God in miraculous working, and now these manifestations are no more to be disclosed, till the Redeemer is manifested in the flesh, and Judea again be made the place of these wonderful works, and the children of Abraham again be the



witnesses of the proof of the mission of Christ, as they were of the mission of Moses. And till we look at the Savior himself, we cannot look at brighter examples than Daniel, and his companions. And in taking our leave of the demonstrations of a God, of his providence, and his word, in Old Testament revelation, we cannot do better than imitate the virtues of these children of the captivity, till we are conducted to fuller light at the end of these wonders.

Ye children, then, imitate them in adhering to wholesome instruction, which you have received. Hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

Ye young men, imitate them in your firmness of christian principle. If you be unstable as water, you can never excel. If you take your rule of action from the popular maxims of the world, you will fail of eminence here, and lose heaven hereafter. Let Saul's inquiry ever be yours—"Lord what wilt thou have me to do;" and when you have learned his will, do it in the face of danger, and of death; and if your course of duty lead you into a fiery furnace, or into a lion's den, the heavenly angel will be with you.

And ye old men, follow the example of Daniel the aged, and pray for Zion, and for the world, with your faces toward the heavenly Jerusalem, till God sends his angel to take you to himself.

## LECTURE XXXII.

### THE ONLY PROPER IMPROVEMENT OF MIRACULOUS EVIDENCE, TO COME TO CHRIST AND LEARN OF HIM.

“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

MAT. 11 : 28, 29,

Come unto Me, learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

The Savior had just been rebuking those cities in which most of his distinguished miracles had been done, and denounced heavy judgments upon them. To excite them to a better improvement of their privileges, he assures them that if the mighty miracles which had been done in them, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long since, in sackcloth and ashes. And to operate upon their fears, he tells them, that the punishment of those heathen cities will be less severe in the judgment than theirs—that Sodom itself would have remained unto that time, if as many miracles had been wrought in it, as they had witnessed; and therefore the punishment of Sodom would be less than theirs. Who can think of the punishment of Sodom without dread? and who, in his conception of their characters, does not place them among the most abandoned of mankind? In these statements we are taught the very natural principle that under the government of God we will be treated according to the moral or spiritual light we have—that the wicked will suffer in proportion to

their privileges. But the Savior was in these cities only a few days. Only a few of all the miracles which were wrought, were performed before them. Only a part of those wrought by the Savior himself were done there. How much increased, then, the privilege of such as are permitted to contemplate them all, both of the Old and New Dispensation: those of God before Moses, those of Moses, and those who succeeded him, through a long period of prophetic history; those of Christ in every place, and every variety of circumstance. Neglecting the practical improvement of the sure word of this testimony, may we not ask, without the hope of an answer, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

If those who saw a few of the Savior's miracles, and heard a part of his instructions, were threatened and suffered thus, what must be the doom of those who go down to hell from this day of increased light—of those who are educated in the ways of religion, who are instructed from Sabbath to Sabbath in various ways, who grow up amid the means of grace, and at last are lost for want of improving them. What will be the doom of any of us, who for a period half the length of the whole of Christ's public ministry have had our attention directed to the consideration of these same works, which distinguished Chorazin and Bethsaida, which exalted Capernaum to heaven, and which, by not being properly regarded, became the occasion of their

deeper condemnation. As we hasten through these sublime displays of omnipotence, as we from week to week trace the footsteps of a God on earth, and mark the resistless energy of his hand, moulding the elements of nature at his will, and controlling her most permanently established laws at his pleasure, shewing to the universe that matter and mind, in [their longest established laws, and in their firmest attitudes of resistance, change their modes of action at the bidding of him who made them, when a higher object demands it. As we view these multiplied evidences of God's care to give us undoubted evidence of his own existence and constantly superintending providence—while we contemplate this surplus of evidence to establish beyond all contradiction, the fact so necessary for us to know, that God has revealed his will to man—that Jesus Christ is the true, infallible, and only Savior of a spiritually ruined world—let us, as it were, stop to-day and inquire, what is the improving, and sanctifying effect of all these interviews we have had with the mysterious movements of the divinity among the beings of his workmanship—what the elevating, and sanctifying effect which all these interviews with a God coming down from the lofty dwelling place of spirits into a world of matter has had upon our minds. The effect of one miraculous interview which Moses had with God, was so to assimilate his countenance to the heavenly likeness, that the people could not steadfastly behold its superlative glory. The effect of another interview upon two favored disciples, was to induce them to say, in the utterance of inexpressible delight, “It is good to be here.” The miraculous multiplication of bodily food, led others to follow him beyond the



sea, and to say, "Ever more give us this bread." The presence of God in miracles made even the demoniacs to be afraid, and say, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" What then has been the effect of all these displays of God, in miracles, upon us? Has it been of fear or love, of confidence or hope, of repentance or submission? What more of faith in the Redeemer, who is the manifestation of the godhead in miraculous energy, as well as the great moving and attractive central object toward which all the movements in the materialism of nature, as well as the regular operation of the laws in the kingdom of grace, are designed to conduct us? If through the apprehension that this magnificent object in the mediatorial kingdom, this upholding pillar of the spiritual edifice has not been sufficiently magnified in our view, while we have been contemplating him in his majestic movements through the laws of nature, and overturning them at pleasure; or, if we have not seen him distinctly, while we have been looking at him through the vail of Moses; or, if from that remote point of vision we have not been able, as we desire, with Abraham to behold his day and rejoice, let us to-day draw near, within hearing of his own voice; and this we can do without dread of that majesty which controls the elements: for he bids us, saying, "Come unto me." If we are afraid, that like Capernaum, after witnessing so many of his miracles, we have not yet truly learned his character, and that Capernaum's doom may be ours, let us, to avoid this, now obey his command, and learn of him, by the teachings of his lips, what we have failed to do by the exhibitions of his power. If we have not yet found that rest for our souls which we

have been too feebly seeking through the proofs of his divinity and the evidences of his Messiahship, while we have seen the proofs of his divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, let us now comply with his invitation to come to himself, and his command to learn of him, and the promise in all its extent will be realized: "Ye shall find rest to your souls." As this stands so near the statement of Chozrazin's misimprovement of his mighty works, and Capernaum's doom, it seems to be the Savior's own counsel, to remove the one, or to avoid the other.

Here is an invitation, a command, and a promise. The first is necessary to the second, and the second to the third, and all are necessary to the full possession of the Savior's mediation. But miracles are necessary to enable us properly to comply with the first, and yield an intelligent and hearty consent to the invitation, to come to him for the purposes in view. Why should we come to one to be taught, of whose ability we have not evidence sufficient to give us confidence? and why should we come to one for rest, of whose power to afford it any doubt remained? and how can we have the evidence of the one or the other, without mighty works to prove it. It was not without good reason then, that the unbelieving Jews asked, "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see and believe thee? what dost thou work?" To come to him, means to believe in him, to trust him for all the purposes of salvation. To do this on his terms, without conditions being specified by us. For doing this, we must have ample evidence of his divinity: for how could a created being, however exalted, sustain the weighty interests of our souls through eternity. But how can we know he is divine, unless he does

the works of God? In reference to this he says, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." The meaning of this appears to be, that if he had not proved himself to be divine by his works, it would be no sin to disbelieve in him; but since he has given this proof, unbelief has no excuse. Thus, faith rests upon evidence. Evidence not as to the manner *how* things are; but of the facts *that they are*. It does not withhold belief till it knows how the divine and human nature are united in the person of Christ; but it believes when it sees in his wonderful person the certain evidences of both. It is satisfied of the one, by the evident movement of humanity in his life; of the other, by the manifest puttings forth of divinity. It sees in him the weakness of man, and the power of God. By the one, he is encouraged to approach him; by the other, he is sure of obtaining all that he needs. Thus, the individual pressed with a sense of want and helplessness, and satisfied of the Savior's character, complies with the invitation, and comes to him, and thus he is prepared to obey the command, "Learn of me." To be effectually taught, we must have the best means of instruction. Jesus Christ is the best qualified for this office. He is recommended to the world by Moses, when he said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things." This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him in mount Sinai, and with our fathers who received the lively oracles to give unto us,—Upon whom was to rest, in the highest sense, the Spirit of Jehovah, the spirit of wis-

dom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, and of the fear of the Lord. By him was to be fulfilled the prediction, "They shall be all taught of the Lord. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." He is the wisdom of God itself, which Jehovah possessed in the beginning of his ways before his works of old. With these high qualifications, he invites the world to his feet, to receive instruction: the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned. He leads the blind in a way that they know not. His teaching is characterized.

First, As being *theoretical*.

For this, he proclaims his qualifications in the verse preceding the invitation to come to him. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." When he speaks of the character of God, and heavenly things, he says, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." His knowledge is original and underived. And the mysteries which were hid from ages, and generations, are made known to us through the Gospel. He only teaches truly what God is; what man is; what God's law is; what satisfaction it requires, that its penalty may be averted from the guilty; what satisfaction has been rendered; and, in what way we must be interested in it, in order to be saved. He teaches the whole theory of salvation with authority, with clearness, with simplicity, and with the most familiar illustrations. He teaches by his life, by his death, by his resurrection, and by his spirit



Second, His teaching is *experimental*.

By enlightening the understanding, by quickening the conscience, and renovating the affections. In this way he fulfills the promise, "A new heart will I give you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." In this way the invitation is complied with, "O taste and see that the Lord is Good." In this way the disciples, whom he effectually teaches, become not enlightened statues, but living stones, with sensitive heart, and animated life; and thus,

Third, He teaches *practically*.

His lessons on this particular are, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Whosoever doeth the will of God, "the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." He that heareth, and doeth not, is like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. The doctrine is taught, the experience is given, that they may walk in his statutes, keep his ordinances, and do them. His teaching makes a world of light, of feeling, and of action; and the first two are in order to the last. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

The promise is to him that thus cometh, and learneth of Christ, that he shall find rest to his soul.

This promise is intended to embrace every thing included in the present spiritual peace, and the future glorification of the sanctified. This promise is unspeakably comprehensive. It is like is author, *boundless*. It is a rest for the soul; and the soul needs much to compose it. The soul is for immortality; the promise must be as extensive. The certainty of its fulfillment rests upon two things: the ability of the promiser, and his faithfulness. To

encourage us, with regard to his resources, he said, just before, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." For the purpose of the administration of the mediatorial kingdom, *all* nature, and grace are put under contribution to him. We have his promise for the fulfillment, and his word for the ability to do it. But, among men, we wish for more than both these to settle our confidence; especially where much is depending. And we have more than both these, in the mighty works which were performed to prove the word to be true. That all things are put into his hand for future disposal, is proven by the fact, that all things are subservient to his will now; and that nature changes her established laws when he bids her. Do we ask the evidence of his ability to fulfill a promise so large? He gives it; and nature, in one and another of her departments, stops, or changes, to let us see that the Mediator is her Lord. The proof of ability then, is complete. But, it is not every one who is able, that is willing to fulfill his promises. And here again the mighty works come to the aid of our faith. The fact, that there is a deviation at all, by miraculous power, in nature's uniform laws, proves that her constancy is the result of the divine will. If the constancy was not the effect of will, the departure from it might be a *chance*, as well as the constancy. This constancy, too, may be properly regarded as the fulfillment of promise, impressed upon us as an instinctive law of our nature, by which we necessarily expect similar results, from like causes. We see the sun rise once, we expect it again; we see spring, with its cheerfulness return once, we expect it again, without any doubt. So of every thing else. The reason is, God constructed

our minds, so as to rely upon his own faithfulness in nature. This confidence he never disappoints. The more science learns of the laws of nature, the more confidently she decides that nature never violates her own laws: upon this rests all the certainty of science. The only exceptions have been, when the works of God have yielded, for the establishing of his word. This faithfulness of God in his works, proves his faithfulness in his word. The God of nature and the God of grace, is the same; and the present administration of the Mediator is over both. Is there such an inseparable connection between the promise and its fulfillment in nature, that the whole world relies on it, and will hardly believe that this connection has been broken by miracle? Why not believe this connection equally certain in grace? If you confidently believe God *working*, why not as confidently believe God *speaking*? If you believe him speaking in the instinct of your nature, that the flowers will return upon the earth; why not as certainly believe him when he says, "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." The law fixing the connection between learning of Christ, and salvation, is as firmly established as any other law.





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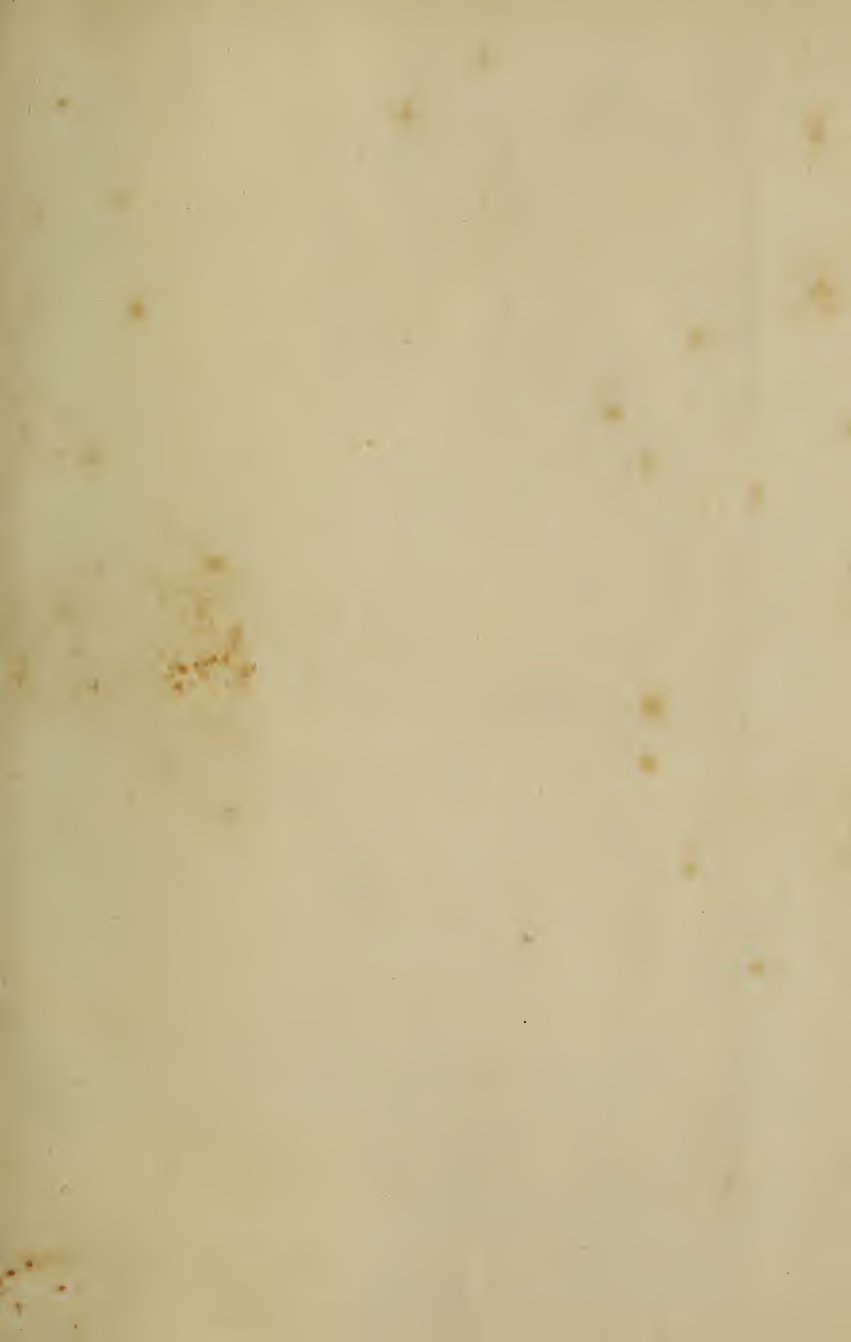
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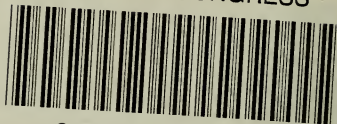
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